

THE Atlantic

JANUARY / FEBRUARY 2003

MONTHLY

THE REAL STATE OF THE UNION

Special Atlantic Report

A MISCARRIAGE OF JUSTICE

*Robert F. Kennedy Jr. on
trial of Michael Skakel*

SEX & POLITICS

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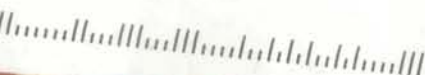
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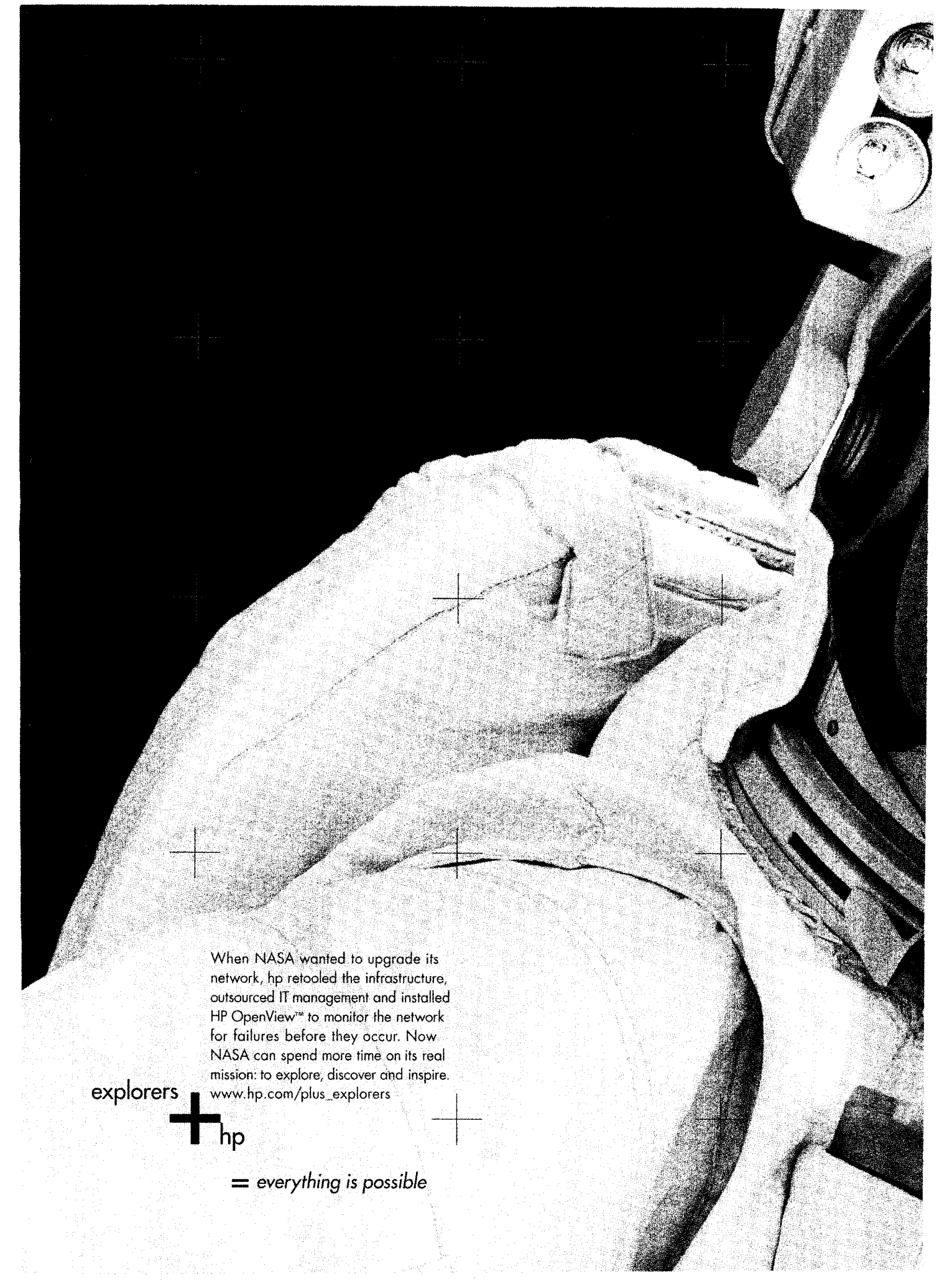


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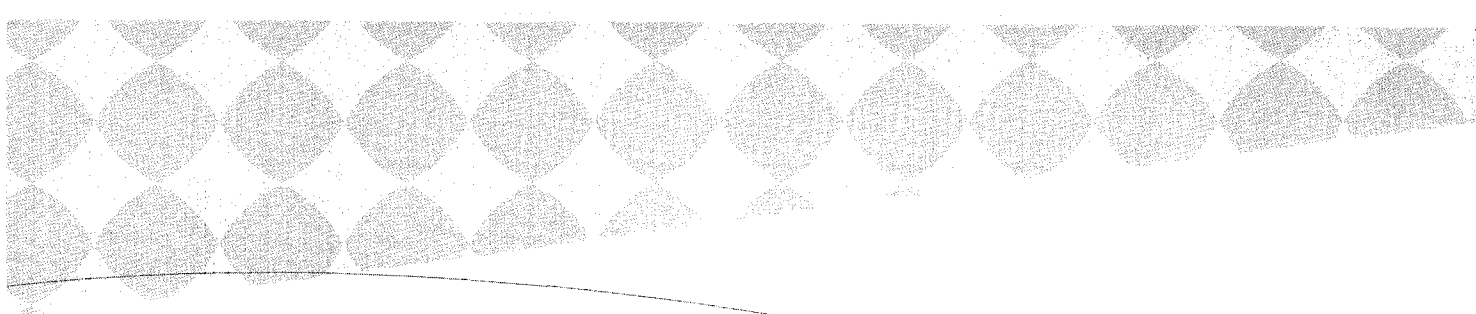
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THE Atlantic

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The State of the Union

An interview with Ted Halstead

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National discussion of the state of the union

What are the most pressing issues confronting the United States today? Discuss your views with others in Post & Riposte, *The Atlantic's* online forum. Also, if you were the President, what would you say to Congress?

And, coming in February, an annotated version of Bush's State of the Union address

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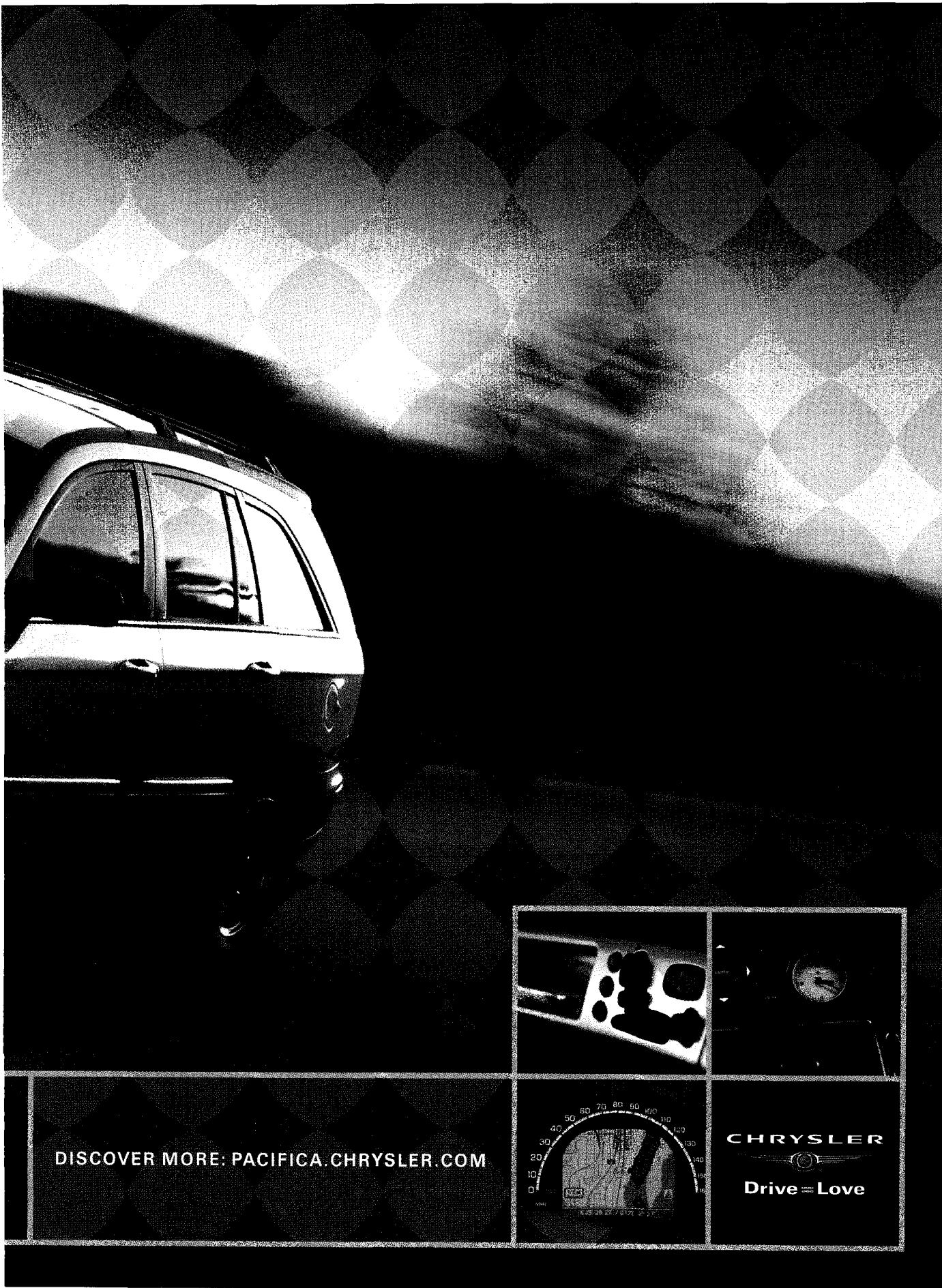
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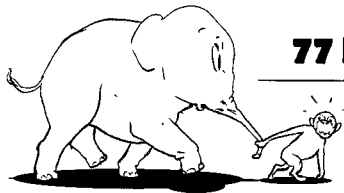
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With uncharacteristic staying power the American national gaze this past year has been directed almost entirely outward, at events as they have developed uncertainly around the world—in Afghanistan and Pakistan, in Israel and Iraq, in North Korea, in Southeast Asia, and even in a Europe increasingly uncomfortable with the assertive role that the United States is playing. But as any observer of American politics and society well knows, this won't last. Sooner or later public attention will return, as it always does, to the country's social bedrock, domestic affairs, where there is much unfinished business.

Under ordinary circumstances one obvious opportunity for a shift of focus would present itself later this month, when President George W. Bush delivers the annual State of the Union address to a joint session of Congress. But if the Republican strategy in the most recent election campaign is any guide, the President will continue to train his sights, and the country's, mainly on the confrontation with Iraq, the war against terrorism, and America's role in the world. No significant shift toward domestic affairs is likely—as Nick Calio, the White House's chief legislative liaison, in essence admitted during an interview with National Public Radio this past December. When asked about the amount of attention that the Bush Administration, given its international preoccupations, will be able to devote to the domestic agenda in 2003 (and whether, indeed, there would be any “air” left for it at all), Calio was not encouraging. “There is always room or air left for a domestic agenda,” he said noncommittally.

Our cover feature this month, “The Real State of the Union,” is dedicated to examining the situation at home. Collected in this issue are more than a dozen nonpartisan assessments of major aspects of the nation's domestic health, together with specific and practical suggestions for improvement. In looking to enlist a group of imaginative writers and thinkers, *The Atlantic* forged a partnership with the New America Foundation (www.newamerica.net)—a nonprofit public-policy think tank based in Washington, D.C., that since its inception, in 1999, has been devoted to bringing “exceptionally promising new voices and new ideas to the fore of our nation's public discourse.” *The Atlantic's* national correspondent James Fallows chairs the foundation's board. Using what it describes as a venture-capital

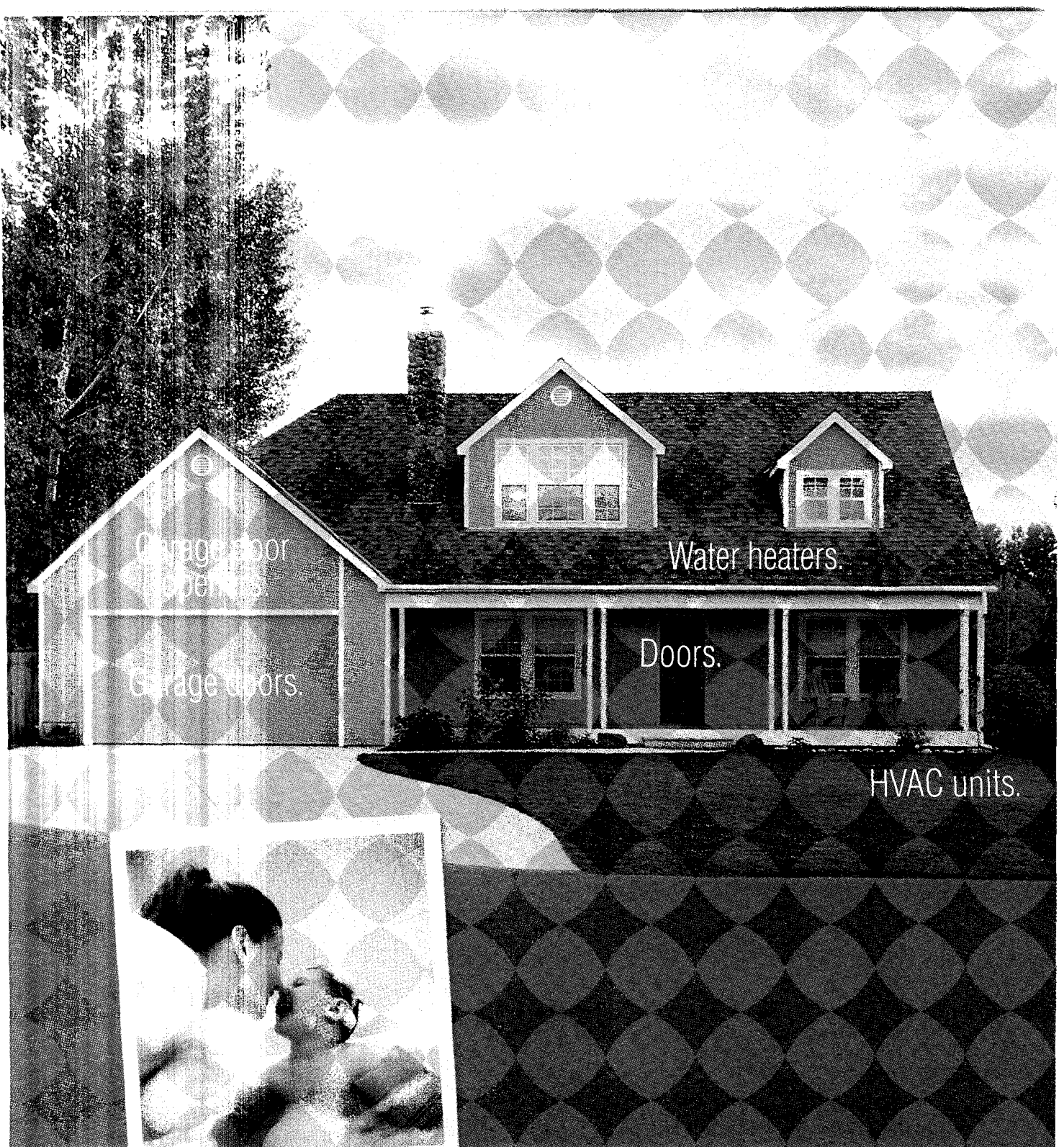
approach, New America aims to invest in creative young public-policy writers who can help to address the “dearth of new thinking on both sides of the political divide” and, in so doing, can spark a robust debate on the challenges that face the country. The foundation puts a premium on innovative and independent-minded analysts whose ideas don't tilt predictably to one side or the other of the traditional left-right spectrum. Because of the unconventionality of their thinking, such writers often have no obvious patrons and platforms for their work—a situation New America seeks to remedy by offering one-year fellowships that include generous stipends, office space, health insurance, and research and editorial assistance.



Ted Halstead, the thirty-four-year-old founder and president of the New America Foundation, is no stranger to *The Atlantic*. He has written two cover stories for this magazine. The first, co-authored with Jonathan Rowe and Clifford Cobb, was the widely cited “If the GDP Is Up, Why Is America Down?” (October 1995), which proposed a new way of measuring economic growth that would take account of environmental and other costs not normally factored into official reckonings. The second, “A Politics for Generation X” (August 1999), looked at the potentially enormous power of the hard-to-pigeonhole political views—largely ignored or dismissed by politicians and the media—that are held by the 50 million or so Americans born from 1965 to 1978. Halstead has signed on as New America fellows several writers who have also been contributors to *The Atlantic* over the years, and in keeping with the New America mission, he has encouraged the fellows to disseminate their views widely in the national media. The strategy has been remarkably successful. There is perhaps no think tank in the United States whose writers have a broader public reach.

The “State of the Union” feature is one that we hope to return to, in one form or another, each year.

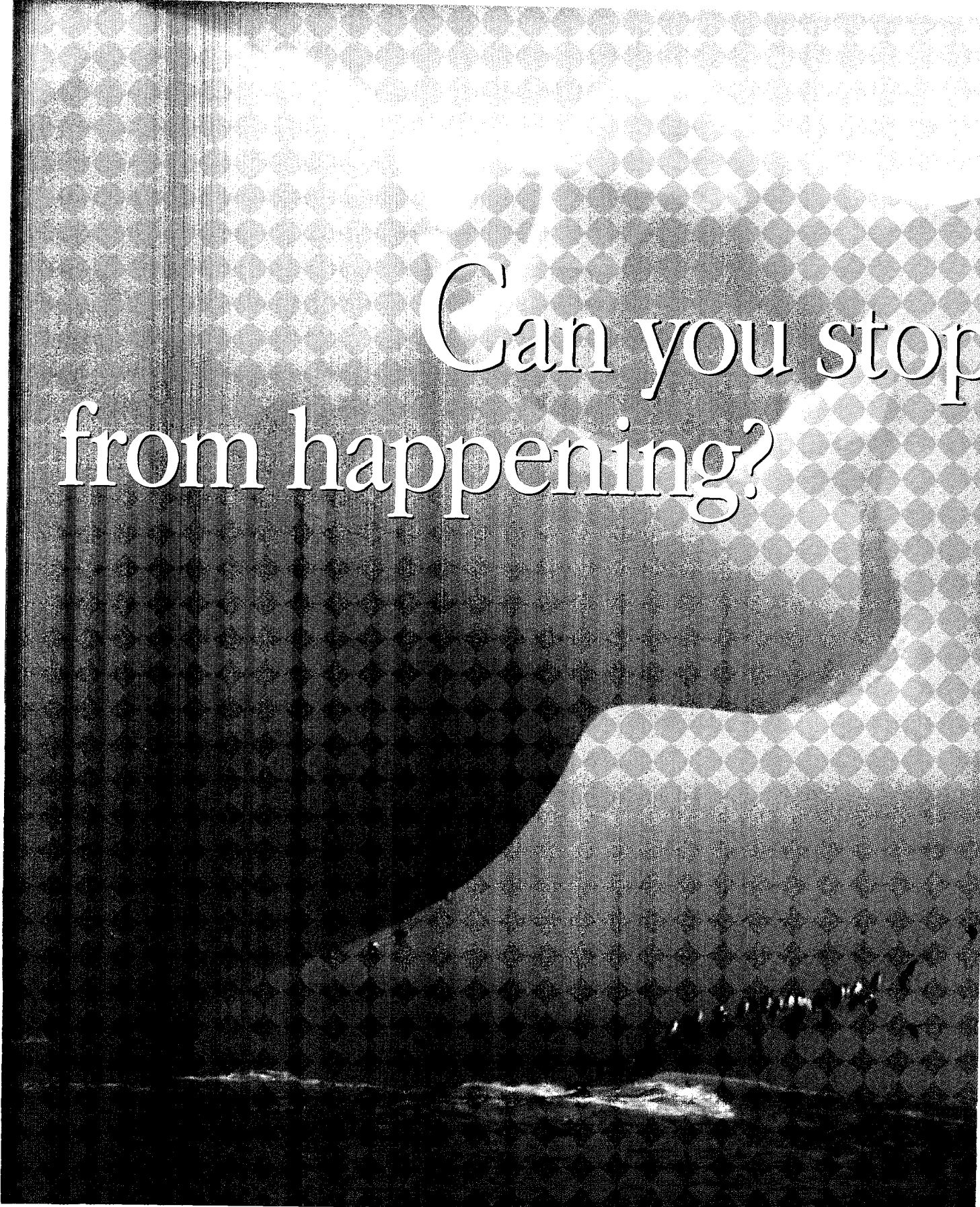
WITH THIS ISSUE OF THE MAGAZINE we begin publishing two double issues a year—one in January/February, and one in July/August. Readers can expect that the amount and the variety of the writing that appears in the magazine will not change. —THE EDITORS



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

American Ground

I just finished reading William Langewiesche's great article "American Ground: Unbuilding the World Trade Center" (July/August, September, and October *Atlantics*). Having spent one week a month at Ground Zero since 9/11 (volunteering for the Salvation Army), and being a retired fire chief with thirty-three years' experience, I think Langewiesche has it right. I often thought while at the "pile/pit" that this was a social experiment in the making. Ground Zero certainly had its own culture, one that will affect the personnel who worked there forever. I was part of the "hype" and patriotic fever—not that it was all bad. But Langewiesche has put it in perspective as no other author has to date.

Don Ford
Pontiac, Ill.

I am astounded by the ironies of the protests against William Langewiesche and his book *American Ground*. I attended the last of his book-signing appearances with my daughter, who became terrified by the picket line of protesting firemen that we unexpectedly encountered. She gripped my arm in fear while urging me not to offer a rebuttal to one of them who had come inside to speak. It was fascinating to experience the freedoms we all proclaim to hold dear—the freedom to write, to buy a book, to protest—come so close to being trampled when one does not agree with another's view. Was my daughter's fear of leaving (as evidenced by prolonged loitering inside the bookstore) any different from others' fear of flying after September 11? Isn't instilling fear in order to change behavior the primary objective of the terrorism we are all committed to eradicating?

The reaction of Egyptians to the conclusions of the EgyptAir investigation are perhaps more ironic, although cer-

tainly less ominous, than the reactions of some Americans to the observations in *American Ground*. While reading the November 2001 *Atlantic* cover story on EgyptAir, also by William Langewiesche, I was amazed by the passionate refusal of the parties involved to accept the apparent facts. I concluded that this was just one manifestation of the vast cultural differences between America and other societies. Yet today there are people in my country who have never been to "the pile" who are equally passionate in disputing the observations of someone who was there for several months. Perhaps in this age of heightened friction between Eastern and Western cultures there is not as much dividing us as we believe. Because we are human beings, our emotions may have greater control over our actions than we may want to believe.

Thank you, William Langewiesche. Thank you for insights that I would never have been able to gain otherwise. Most of all, thank you and the protesters and the bookstore owners for a unique opportunity to explain what truth and freedom mean to an eleven-year-old girl who before the night of that book signing did not realize their connection to the absence of fear.

Craig Hattabaugh
Weston, Mass.

I'd be surprised if I'm not the ten thousandth reader to write this, but thank you and thank William Langewiesche for his revealing, insightful, straightforward, and obviously well-researched and well-written account of Ground Zero. It is quite simply the greatest piece of journalism I have ever read.

Joe Donatelli
Los Angeles, Calif.

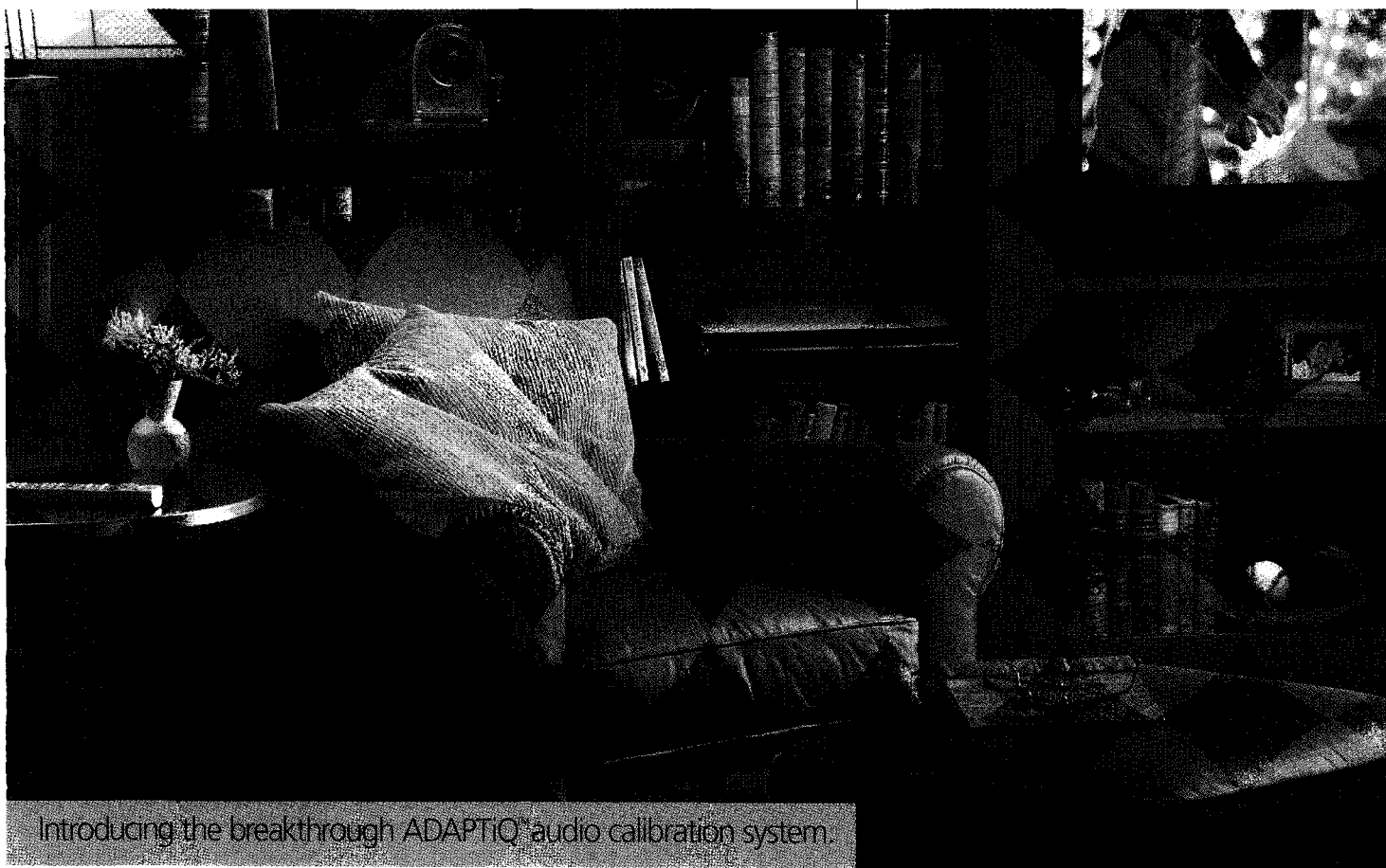
Finishing William Langewiesche's three-part series on the deconstruction of the WTC "pile" left me breath-

less. His incisive and compassionate take on the Herculean task facing the city and private work forces will doubtless form a seminal document on the subject for generations to come.

How I wish that Langewiesche had written a paragraph or two about life beyond the WTC perimeter during those months, if only to complete the dark picture of devastation and ruin that racked Lower Manhattan.

For those tens of thousands of us who worked or lived within blocks of the towers, the going was very, very tough. We were aware that our lives had been spared that day; if one or both of the towers had toppled instead of collapsed, the death and destruction would have been far greater. But the day-to-day existence in that war zone during the following months was a trial all its own. At first fawn talc, remains of the pulverized concrete and metal, and we *knew* what else covered everything—windows and windowsills, awnings, rooftops, building façades, and store displays. Then we heard the discomfiting screams of sirens, as police and fire vehicles raced to the site daily for any number of reasons—perhaps to deal with the fires that kept erupting, or the discovery of bodies. The occasional rumors of imminent flooding or nearby buildings about to collapse were unnerving, together with the ubiquitous metal barricades closing off the streets and sidewalks of our neighborhood. These were attended by seas of blue and camouflage, heavily armed and uniformed men and women constantly demanding to see the identification of ordinary persons trying only to enter their places of work. We competed for space on the narrowed sidewalks with gawkers and snapshot takers whose presence we at first deeply resented but would eventually learn to tolerate. Any loud sound, to say nothing of any aircraft flying overhead, made us jump. And for

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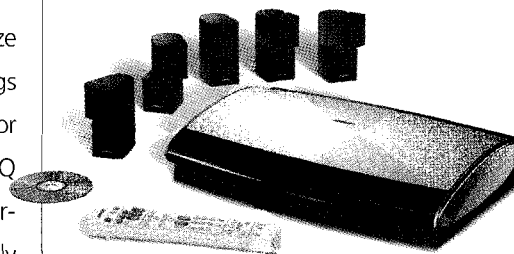
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months afterward we encountered the constant smell of burning, acrid air, tinged now and again with the unmistakable scent of decay, that reached as far down as the subway stations and greeted us every morning as soon as we stepped out of a train. Few believed that the air was free of asbestos or other toxic substances, despite governmental assurances to the contrary.

Our faces were grave, somber, perpetually depressed; the atmosphere and mood endlessly funereal. Yet we had no choice but to carry on. The 9/11 attack and its aftermath viscerally affected everyone, everywhere. But in something of a different sense, it *happened* to us.

Michael E. Zuller
Great Neck, N.Y.

Throughout “American Ground,” William Langewiesche attempts to substantiate unfounded myths—about the New York City Fire Department, about the rescue operation, about what “really” happened at the World Trade Center—as cold hard facts. And repeatedly he fails.

Most preposterous and saddening of all these attempts is his “jeans” story, in which Langewiesche “concludes” that firefighters responding to the scene of the World Trade Center chose to loot jeans and stuff them into the cab of their truck rather than help save lives in the burning buildings. It’s an unfounded accusation that unfortunately sets the tone for Langewiesche’s unabashed—and undeserved—attack on the Fire Department.

The evidence that made it “hard to avoid the conclusion that ... while hundreds of doomed firefighters had climbed through the wounded building, this particular crew had been engaged in something else entirely” is questionable at best. Langewiesche cites as evidence the removal of a ladder truck from deep within the rubble of the South Tower; when “the hulk of the truck appeared, rather than containing bodies ... its crew cab was filled with dozens of new pairs of jeans from The Gap, a Trade Center store.” That is the evidence on which Langewiesche bases his absurd conclusion, and yet the facts of the day point to a very different, far more logical conclusion.

The men from that truck—Ladder 4—were actually doing their jobs that day: the bodies of Ladder 4 members were found near a South Tower elevator, along with a Hurst tool that they, in their last moment of life, were using to extract the victims trapped inside. Ladder 4, which was parked at street level near the command center established by the South Tower, was recovered from the B5 level of the South Tower parking lot, well below street level. The lower floors of the South Tower were occupied by commercial spaces, and the force of the building’s collapse spread debris from those commercial spaces—which included stores that sold pairs of jeans—through the larger pile of rubble. Other vehicles caught within the collapse were also found with commercial debris blown inside them from the force of the falling building.

At least five eyewitnesses to the recovery of Ladder 4 attest to the accuracy of these facts and dispute Langewiesche’s version. They include an FDNY recovery-team leader, a grapppler operator, a member of Local 14 working at the site, and two other FDNY members—a firefighter and a battalion chief—also working that night tour. Langewiesche was perhaps unaware of, or chose to disregard, these facts. In this one instance of misrepresentation and inaccurate conclusion he clouds the credibility of his larger narrative.

Langewiesche and *The Atlantic* should not have tarnished the memory of our city’s heroes with foolish, unfounded, and absurd accusations. Such absurdity degrades men who valiantly died trying to save lives. Such absurdity insults countless others who devoted months to the dignified and respectful recovery of all victims of the attacks. Such absurdity insults the truth.

Nicholas Scoppetta
Fire Commissioner
New York City Fire Department
New York, N.Y.

William Langewiesche replies:

Nicholas Scoppetta is known to be a fine and honorable man, and I respect his concern about the reputation of the department he heads. However, after months of nearly constant presence at the Trade Center site, I had

the task of writing frankly about the scene there—not as various groups might have wished it to be but in its full and rich complexity. The “jeans” story was a minuscule part of that. It was reported and verified by multiple reliable sources, and as written (with identities carefully omitted), it was strictly related to the reactions and interpretations on the “pile” at the time, months after the collapses, and not to whatever may or may not have actually happened on 9/11. It has been taken out of context by people whose anger seems to stem from my unwillingness to endorse uncritically every element of the heroic imagery that has been promulgated about the Trade Center site. Nonetheless, I believe that “American Ground” stands as a deep tribute to all the groups involved in the Trade Center recovery work, including New York City’s firefighters.

The Roaring Nineties

In “The Roaring Nineties” (October *Atlantic*), Joseph Stiglitz fails to account for the normal cycle of growth and maturation in the industries producing the major new inventions of our era: cell phones, personal computers, home Internet service, Web sites, and their corporate and government information-technology cousins.

These and all other inventions follow a trajectory similar to that of the farm tractor. A few primitive tractors had been built by 1909. As the technology improved, construction workers built more factories to produce more tractors. Tractor production and the workers required for it grew until the early 1950s, when production peaked at 750,000 tractors per year. By then most farmers owned tractors; the industry became mature, and annual production plummeted to 300,000 over the next three years, inducing widespread layoffs. No new factories needed to be built, and tractor production ultimately stabilized at just a third of the peak rate. The normal growth and maturation of a major industry is sufficient to induce large and rapid changes in employment, first up and then down; one does not need to invoke policy to explain them.

An alternative explanation for the Roaring Nineties is this: the industries associated with the new inventions of

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our era grew rapidly in employment and production during the 1990s and matured nearly simultaneously around 2000, resulting in enormous layoffs. Neither the policymakers nor the politicians had much of anything to do with it.

*John Frisch
Wichita, Kans.*

Thank you for the very informative article by Joseph Stiglitz. I really enjoyed his comments. However, the "savings-and-loan debacle" to which Stiglitz refers, "in which the U.S. government had to bail out banks," involved not a single bailing out of a savings and loan, and was quite different from the problems faced by our large commercial banks in the 1980s. The banks' problems were unwise loans given to governments and too much lending on beautiful real estate that had no tenants.

I have been involved in the savings-and-loan business for more than forty years, and I am well acquainted with the problems of the eighties. The major problem was a government program to deregulate the liabilities of these institutions without allowing any relief on the asset side when the inevitable happened. The government compounded this error by encouraging healthy institutions to take over sick and dying institutions with the use of what was referred to as purchase accounting and also by instituting a way that existing thrifts could sell off below-market loans and book the loss as an asset. These programs were all the doing of the Federal Home Loan Bank Board and an attempt to forestall and disguise the public insolvency of the Federal Savings and Loan Insurance Corporation. The savings and loan did not ask for this deregulation, did not want this deregulation, behaved admirably and honorably in the face of an impossible economic situation, and was brought down because of an inept government program of deregulation and its reluctance to credit an error.

The cost of this so-called debacle was multiplied manyfold by the use of thirty-year financing to solve a four-to-five-year problem. This is a mistake that a first-year finance student or anybody with a modicum of common sense would not have made. It managed to

add \$350 to \$400 billion to the cost of this bailout, which prior to that time had estimates of about \$130 billion.

*Robert J. Sharfman
Chicago, Ill.*

"The Roaring Nineties" was insightful, but there is no mystery about why unemployment below six percent did not cause rising labor costs and inflation—something else for which, if we're so inclined (and I'm not), we can thank Alan Greenspan.

Joseph Stiglitz asserts that some aspects of the 1990s "powerfully benefited the poor," a point with which I take issue. Rising labor costs—and inflation—happen only with labor shortages. The 1990s brought no substantive labor shortages, because legal immigration, at 1.2 million people a year, brought more immigrants than even the million-a-year average of the Great Wave from the 1880s to 1918. Add significant numbers of illegal workers, and salaries remained stagnant especially for the poor—immigrant and non-immigrant alike.

That wage- and inflation-depressing factor of unprecedented immigration was not lost on Greenspan, an outspoken advocate for high immigration. But it might well be added to Stiglitz's list of ill-conceived, ill-advised business subsidies at the expense of our long-term well-being.

*Kathleene Parker
Los Alamos, N.M.*

School Vouchers

Jonathan Rauch's argument for school vouchers (*The Agenda*, October *Atlantic*) is a strong one, to which I would like to add another: break the stranglehold of the colleges of education on entry to the teaching profession! In my experience, the college of education is too often a last refuge for students who cannot meet the foreign-language requirement for a B.A., and have no head for science, math, or technology. Let anyone with a degree in any field submit his or her records and references to school boards. Check the applicants' legal backgrounds, and test them psychologically. Give them written guides to the principles of conduct, legal and ethical standards, meth-

ods of dealing with parents and with problem students. Supervise them for a while! Then let them teach. I think our failing schools would be the very first to benefit from a higher quality of teacher.

*Sister Kate Hawthorne
Rineyville, Ky.*

Incredibly, Jonathan Rauch's piece in *Praise of school vouchers* does not even mention the pre-eminent objection to them: since 80 percent of private schools are parochial, vouchers are public funds that directly support religious education.

*James S. Bernstein
Rockville Centre, N.Y.*

Jonathan Rauch makes the same mistake that most school-voucher advocates make: equating school choice with healthy competition. Vouchers, in his view, would force public schools to "shape up" when faced with the rivalry of private schools. But it is an odd notion of competition that requires one competitor to assume significant burdens from which the others are immune.

A federal law, the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act, mandates that public schools offer "free, appropriate public education" to all students, no matter what their level of ability. If children require constant one-on-one attention, or if they need special classroom adaptations to accommodate their specific needs, or if their behavioral problems preclude a normal classroom setting, public schools must provide for them. This kind of attention, though morally just and necessary, can be extremely expensive, in many cases exceeding \$50,000 per student per year.

Private schools can choose to avoid this responsibility, and most do. If Rauch wants real competition between public and private schools, he should advocate adherence to the IDEA for all schools involved. Otherwise, private schools will be able to use tax money to educate only those students who fit their admissions criteria, leaving public schools to deal with everyone else. It is easy to predict where that kind of "competition" will lead.

*Jefferson Ranck
Portland, Ore.*

Designer Bugs

I read of the bio-engineered mousepox-IL-4 virus, with its 100 percent lethality rate, when the experiment was first announced, in July of 2000. My first thought was "What's to stop scientists from introducing interleukin-4 into human smallpox?" Jon Cohen ("Designer Bugs," July/August *Atlantic*) prefers to downplay this possibility by citing the virologist Frank Fenner's objections. Fenner gives three reasons why smallpox-IL-4 will never be created: it might not work; it would most likely kill the scientists, since the virus could beat vaccination; and the virus would kill people too quickly to spread contagion effectively.

The first objection is academic. The second does not consider the possibility that scientists given to religious fanaticism or delusion would be willing to give their lives in service to an apocalyptic cause. The third objection seems odd. The longest-lived mice in the mousepox-IL-4 experiment survived ten days.

But even if smallpox-IL-4 killed within only twenty-four hours of exposure, an infected human being could travel quite far in a plane, a train, or an automobile. Especially in the chaos of mass panic.

The new post-9/11 world has no shortage of alarmists. But to give little credence to the worst possible scenario is to be as myopic as the "ostriches" Cohen cites in his article.

John Erdos
Santa Monica, Calif.

Jon Cohen replies:

No precise gauge exists of how much fear people should feel toward specific biological threats, but with accurate information one can at least compare and contrast the various nightmare scenarios. The mousepox-IL-4 experiment, which was first reported in January 2001 (not July 2000), caused a stir not because the virus was uniformly lethal but because it killed 60 percent of mice vaccinated against it. Frank Fenner does not state that smallpox-IL-4 would "never" be created. Rather, he argues that it probably wouldn't work as well as garden-variety smallpox.

The three points listed in John Erdos's letter simply reiterate why Fenner thinks a bioterrorist or bio-weapioneer would rather use regular smallpox than one that carries the IL-4 gene. The "worst possible" scenario, then, need not involve any genetic engineering, and my article attempted to highlight this, because fears of the unknown often wrongly overshadow fears of the known.

Homeland Insecurity

As the primary sponsor of the Driver's License Modernization Act (DLMA), I was disappointed to see that Charles Mann's article "Homeland Insecurity" (September *Atlantic*) compounded an obvious bias against the proposal with factual errors.

Mann claims that the DLMA "envision[s] storing smart-card information in one [national] database," which shows a fundamental misunderstanding of the bill, the technology, and history. The advantage of smart cards is that they are "databases of one" that do not need to be stored; in fact, the bill specifically

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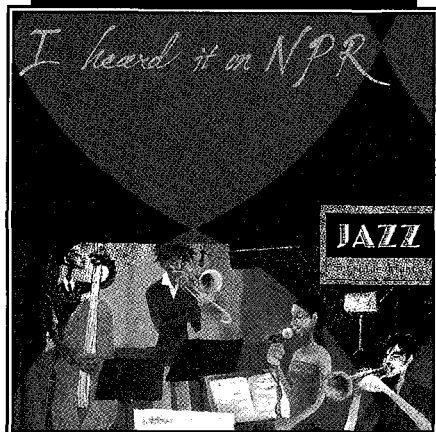
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prohibits storing the card biometrics in a database. What the bill does do is authorize funds to enable the databases of state motor-vehicle agencies to "talk" to one another, to prevent bad drivers and criminals from obtaining multiple licenses from different states.

Mann also claims that smart cards can be cracked using "only a bright light, a standard microscope, and duct tape." Mann is obviously not familiar with the work of the Cambridge security researchers who made this discovery, or he would have listed some of the other requirements: a \$30,000 "probe" to mount the microscope, several weeks, and advanced degrees in computer science. And all that effort will get only the data that any purse snatcher could get just by reading the information printed on each card in your wallet. Who would go to the trouble?

Mann also uncritically repeats Bruce Schneier's fear that criminals might "steal your thumb," making it impossible ever to get back your identity. Mann doesn't say how a thumb might be stolen, except to note that plastic or gelatin molds can fool some scanners. (How does the thief get the mold of your thumb without your noticing?) Stealing a thumb isn't a problem, because a smart card can be canceled and reissued. To use an analogy, if a thief stole the key to your house, you could protect your belongings two ways: by changing the locks or by changing houses. Since you can't change a lock when the key is your thumb, you simply migrate to a new card. Any thief who steals both your smart driver's license and your thumb would be a fool to use either, because once you reported the theft, the first use of the card would result in the thief's capture.

Mann also contends that the smart-driver's-license system would not have stopped the September 11 attacks if it had been in place, prompting Schneier to ask what problem is being solved. The bill is not designed to prevent past terrorist attacks; it is designed to prevent future attacks. All the efforts under way to tighten the visa system and improve terrorist watch lists are useless if a terrorist can walk across the border undetected and get a state-issued driver's license. Among the other problems the smart li-

cense will address are identity theft, dangerous drivers who spread their "points" across multiple licenses, underage drinkers, and the proliferation of authentic-looking ID templates on the Internet.

Nobody claims that any one technology is a magic bullet that will prevent all future terrorist attacks. At the same time, nobody doubts that the driver's-license system is broken: getting a fake ID is practically a rite of passage for American teenagers. The question is how to fix the system while getting the biggest bang for the taxpayers' buck.

James P. Moran
Eighth District of Virginia
U.S. House of Representatives

Charles C. Mann replies:

As James Moran writes, the question is whether the DLMA and other proposed security measures will improve security. In some ways the law might help. For example, the DLMA authorizes funds to help states connect their driver's-license databases to prevent people from obtaining multiple licenses. This sounds like a good idea—but it has nothing to do with the proposed biometric license itself. In other respects, unfortunately, the DLMA would be ineffective or worse.

For example, I argued in my article that the consequences of stealing biometric data would be very difficult for victims: if people steal the digital signature of your thumb, either by deciphering it from the chip in the license or by obtaining your thumbprint, you can't readily obtain a new thumb. Representative Moran responds by suggesting that nobody "would go to the trouble" to crack smart cards directly and that "stealing a thumb" is unlikely. First, after 9/11 it should be clear that people will indeed go to the trouble to do us harm. In Europe, where smart cards are common, forgery has been rampant for years. (In an amazing court case the European pay-TV division of Vivendi Universal and two American pay-TV companies, EchoStar and DirecTV, have accused a corporate rival—a subsidiary of Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation—of cracking the security system of the smart cards used to identify subscribers and distributing the information on the Internet. This demonstrates why the DLMA will not, alas, stop identity theft, underage drinking, or the other "problems" mentioned in the letter.)

Second, as my article made clear, “stealing a thumb” doesn’t mean literally amputating a digit. Thieves “get the mold of your thumb without your noticing” by lifting fingerprints—Representative Moran leaves them on the doorknob of his house every time he walks in. The fingerprints are then scanned, printed in relief, and used to create molds. Representative Moran writes that “any thief who steals both your smart driver’s license and your thumb would be a fool to use either,” because he would be caught the first time he tried to use them. But this would also be true of today’s dumb driver’s licenses if the license databases were better connected to other networks. Again, improvement would have nothing to do with the chip.

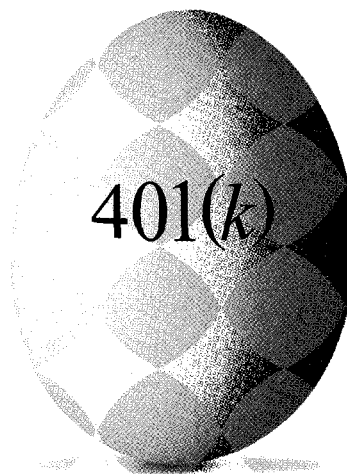
The DLMA, Representative Moran claims, will prevent a terrorist from walking across the border and getting a state-issued license. But foreigners don’t need U.S. licenses to drive here, just as Americans don’t need foreign licenses to drive abroad. If a foreigner on a terrorist watch list wanted a U.S. license, the DLMA would not prevent him from using fake foreign ID to obtain it. The question remains: How will biometric licenses prevent future terrorist attacks? What problem are they solving?

To me, the most intriguing possibility in Representative Moran’s letter is his hint that smart cards’ capacity for storing personal data would mean that less of it would have to be kept in state vehicle-license databases. Indeed, these might be eliminated altogether, which would block the current practice of selling this information—invaluable to stalkers and identity thieves—to companies without drivers’ consent. If this abuse were stopped, the risks to citizens of the new system might well be fewer than those posed by what we have now. Unfortunately, Representative Moran’s bill advocates expanding those state databases—and says nothing about improving their security, which is widely believed to be poor. If he wished to focus his legislation on creating a more secure, more networked driver’s-license system, he might find that Schneier and other security experts would support it, even if one component of that system was biometric cards.

Dining Matters

I thoroughly enjoyed Corby Kummer’s *Palate at Large* in the October *Atlantic*. I first visited Maison Marconi as

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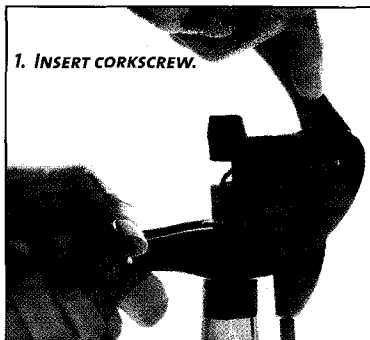
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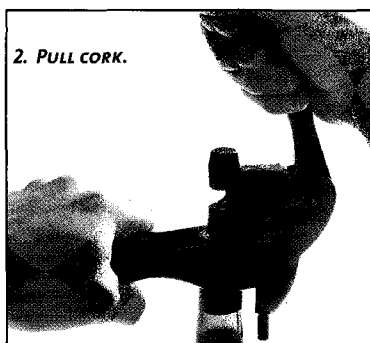
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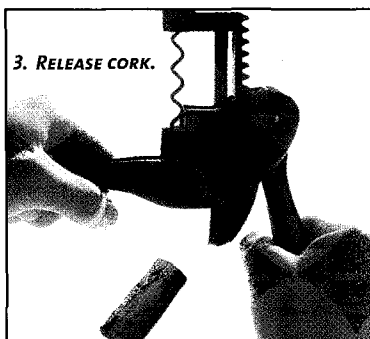
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a grad student at Johns Hopkins, in the 1970s, and then frequented it in the 1980s during a decade in Baltimore. The restaurant has changed far more than Kummer realizes. In those days it took no reservations, and if one was not ready to charge the door at 5:15 to get a seat, one waited, often for more than an hour, in the very crowded vestibule. Men had better be wearing ties and jackets, and even if you looked nice, you might well be seated in the back room if you didn't measure up to what the maitre d' expected. Waiters were wonderful, but took no guff; and if you weren't in the door by 8:00 P.M. you were not going to be served that evening. But the food was worth twice what the place charged, and even today it's as good as I remember. Kummer may have missed one dish that I associate even more with Maison Marconi—namely, Oysters Pauline, in the old days available only on Friday evenings. Now, that would be a recipe worth having!

Ben Primer
Hopewell, N.J.

I greatly enjoy Corby Kummer's articles. The quinoa soup of his November Palate at Large was, as he said, "surprisingly satisfying," made in my kitchen with golden-beet greens. His recipe calls for "well-rinsed" quinoa, and this is something worth stressing. The book *Turn Off the Fat Genes* notes: "Quinoa is coated with a bitter-tasting substance called saponin that repels insects and birds and protects it from ultraviolet radiation. Be sure to wash quinoa thoroughly before cooking to remove this bitter coating."

Diane Pleninger
Anchorage, Alaska

Advice & Consent

My article "Interracial Intimacy," on racially mixed marriages, appeared in the December *Atlantic*. It was largely drawn from my new book, *Interracial Intimacies: Sex, Marriage, Identity, and Adoption*. In the article I quoted several letters to the editor published in *The Village Voice* and *Ebony*, and a statement by the sociologist St. Clair Drake—material to which I was intro-

duced by the Ph.D. dissertation of Renee C. Romano. I cite Romano's dissertation in my book but not in my article, because *The Atlantic* dispenses with footnotes and other bibliographical features that are typically found in scholarly texts.

I learned much from Romano's original and wide-ranging research, which has now become a book, titled *Race Mixing: Black-White Marriage in Postwar America*, to be published by the Harvard University Press. Romano's monograph is excellent, and I hope it will gain the large audience that it deserves.

Randall Kennedy
Cambridge, Mass.

I so appreciate Barbara Wallraff's response to Carl Linhart in the September Word Court. As a teacher of English to seventh-graders, I, too, believe that the study of grammar should be taken more seriously; I am stunned each September by the lack of skills my students bring from their earlier years of "grammar" school. It's true: they don't teach grammar anymore. The National Council of Teachers of English discourages the practice, which has puzzled me for years. My school district follows suit; I have had to store my 1980s grammar and composition books in my classroom to prevent their being "sent to the warehouse" to await a dismal fate.

NCTE president-elect David Bloome's comments to Wallraff are typical of what I hear too. I have yet to find that "great deal of research" to which he alludes, though I am actively looking. My post-graduate research program is centered on the efficacy of grammar instruction in the teaching of writing. I hear repeatedly of "evidence" that teaching grammar is a waste of time, but to date I've found only opinion pieces. Little, if any, empirical data exist to prove the futility of grammatical instruction. I'm hoping to provide some in support of the practice through my own research. Experience in my classroom has shown repeatedly that confidence in one's writing ability grows with one's knowledge of the conventions of standard usage. I will continue to teach grammar, to drill my students, and to edit their papers with my dreaded red pen, de-

spite my department's instructions to the contrary. As a devoted fan of Word Court, I am indeed interested in having my students use apostrophes where needed and not put them where they don't belong.

Peggy Wilson
Clinton, Md.

I enjoyed Cullen Murphy's review of measurement and subjectivity ("The Utmost Measures," October *Atlantic*). However, his article contains one egregious error, when he reports that researchers at Berkeley "randomly selected 720 people at street festivals" for measurement as to sexual orientation and finger length. This is a common mistake. There is absolutely no way the selection of research participants at a street fair could have been "random." Random selection requires that each and every person attending have an equal opportunity to be selected. This requires enumerating and identifying every such person. I suspect that, as in all such intercept interviews in social

and market research, the researchers looked for kindly faces, people like themselves, people amenable to contributing time and finger measurements, and other subjective criteria.

L. M. Guss
Woodinville, Wash.

Aha, another venial sin, in writing about same! In his letter to the editor (October *Atlantic*) on Cullen Murphy's essay "From Soup to Nuts" (July/August *Atlantic*), Richard White writes that "a brother inkslinger, one in the employ of *Newsweek*, wrote recently of 'venal' sin." He concludes, "There is, literally, a hell of a difference." Indeed. The inkslinger was David Gergen, of *U.S. News & World Report* (June 10, in an article called "Love Songs to America"), not *Newsweek*. He wrote, "Roman Catholics distinguish between venal and mortal sins." And between newsweeklies, of course.

Lisa Bergtraum
Newsweek Research Center
New York, N.Y.

The public-relations person who told Ian Frazier ("The Mall of America," July/August *Atlantic*) that, with an addition being planned, the MoA will become bigger than the WestEdmonton Mall is telling only part of the truth. The WestEd has 800 stores, compared with 500 at the MoA, so that would have to be some addition. But in any case, the WestEd is planning its own additions.

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Marc A. Schindler
Spruce Grove, Alberta

July 18, 2006

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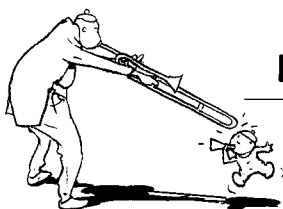
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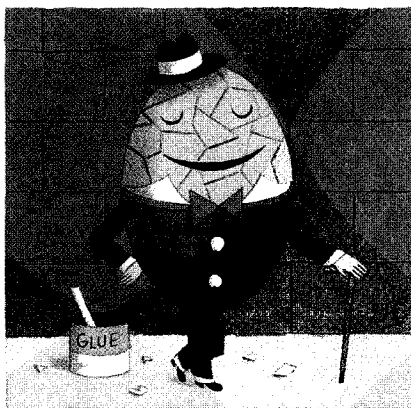
The photograph in *People* magazine shows a fully clothed couple on a double bed, not touching, an empty expanse of sheet between them. He holds a Bible on his lap. She flashes a stay-yonder look. Dawn Bangart and Michael Caldwell, of Abilene, Texas, who are engaged to be married, decided to put aside all sexual activity for the remainder of their courtship—a span of six months. They are but one among many couples who, according to news accounts, are experimenting with a stint of premarital celibacy. The practice is known as “revirginization.” Its aim is “secondary virginity.”

The New York Times took notice of the phenomenon a few months ago in its trend-spotting Styles section, published on Sundays, and gave it a regional cast: “These days, a period of ‘secondary virginity,’ as it is sometimes called, is increasingly the norm for many brides-to-be across the South, an accommodation to the modern reality of premarital sex and the traditional disapproval of it in the Bible Belt.” But the trend is demonstrably more widespread—the *People* story was reported from Denver and Chicago as well as from Abilene. The newly celibate couples reveled in their ex post facto purity. “The key is avoiding temptation,” *People* advised. It so often is.

One reaction to the advent of secondary virginity is that of several parents quoted in the news reports: bewilderment and consternation. Oh, the young—once again, playing with fire! Another reaction comes in the form of a literal-minded parsing: the pursuit of lost virginity, of course, is the pursuit of the unattainable. The horse has left the barn. The toothpaste is out of the tube.

You can’t put Humpty together again.

A different way to see the phenomenon is as a powerful reassertion of American optimism: the conviction that what’s done is not always done, that the broken can be fixed, the ravaged restored—that you can have another swing, can wipe the slate clean, can go back to square one. Among the more inane statements ever to achieve immortality is F. Scott Fitzgerald’s famous observation in *The Last Tycoon*, “There are no second acts in American lives.” This country is premised on second acts. The bankruptcy laws in America, for individuals and for corporations, are astonishingly liberal. Changing one’s



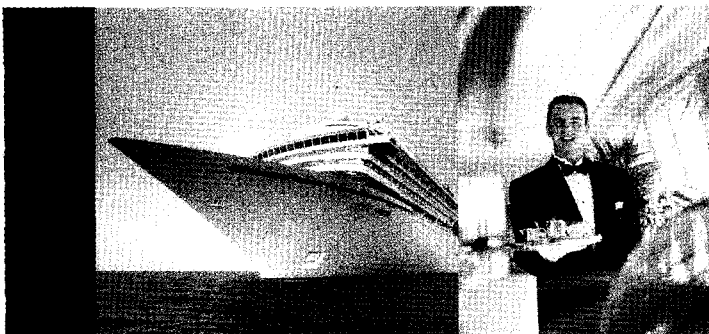
name—stealing someone else’s identity altogether—is a cinch. If you don’t do well on your College Boards, you can take them again (and again), and colleges will look only at your best scores. When the sports announcer Marv Albert became mired in an embarrassing personal scandal a few years ago, the only thing everyone knew was “This is not the end of Marv Albert.” Immigrants reading *The Last Tycoon* in ESL programs must scratch their heads when they come to that apothegm about second acts; more on the right wavelength, if only they could make their way through Henry James’s sentences, would be Christopher Newman,

the protagonist of *The American*, whose very surname shouts “fresh start.” If the Emma Lazarus poem about “your tired, your poor” hadn’t made it onto the plinth of the Statue of Liberty, we might just as well have chiseled the words “Act II.”

You can’t turn back the clock, the realists say, and others warn that in any event we wouldn’t *want* to turn back the clock (“... to the days of back-alley abortions”; “... to the days of segregated lunch counters”). But often we do want to turn back the clock. The word “retro” exists for a reason, and it’s hardly a term of abuse. When world events get out of hand, one frequently hears the wistful desire to “return to the status quo ante”—to the way things used to be. On television two new sitcoms, *Do Over* and *That Was Then*, involve people who get a chance to return to high school as teenagers, with all the accumulated savvy of adulthood: a chance to get it right this time. (Two decades ago the preternaturally boyish David Owen made this transition for real, producing the very funny book *High School*.) Among the spam messages I’ve been getting lately by e-mail is one that announces itself on the subject line with the words “If over 40, turn back the clock.” It offers a supply of human growth hormone, which is said to increase memory, muscle strength, and sexual potency, and to reduce wrinkles and body fat. Medical procedures to replace hips and knees promise to make the joints as good as new. According to NASA, the repairs on the Hubble space telescope actually made it “better than new.”

The notion of secondary virginity has been a mainstay of the environmental movement, extending to its very language. Untouched forests and other tracts of wilderness are said to be “virgin.” When people come into them, the tracts are said to have been defiled. But hold

GREG CLARKE



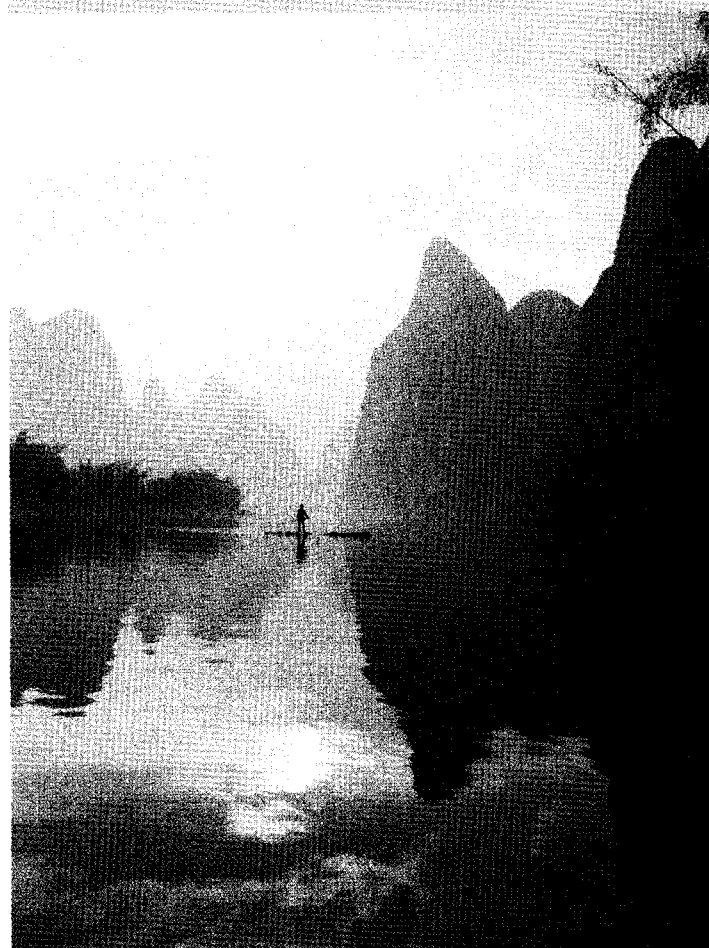
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on: the virginal state can be recaptured. "RESTORING A POLLUTED BAY TO ITS FORMER PRISTINE GLORY" was the headline on a story about the improbable cleanup of New York's Flushing Bay. After the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill, in 1989, Exxon agreed to pay a billion dollars to "restore pristine beaches and waterways." When an alien creature, the toothy and fearsome northern snakehead, from Asia, recently infested a pond in Maryland, some environmentalists proposed to restore the ecosystem to a virginal state by means of mass poisoning (followed by mass electrocutions), killing everything in it.

We may scoff at secondary virginity in any literal sense, and yet we have long taken the idea of secondary integrity for granted. Many of the world's great religions offer some sort of procedure for removing the stain of transgression (though the garments sometimes come back from the cleaner with a tag saying that not everything came out). Even a secular faith such as communism offers a second chance. After Stalin's death, in 1953, many of those accused during the Great Terror were publicly "rehabilitated"; in millions of these cases, unfortunately, the rehabilitation was posthumous. Other secular faiths, such as public relations and political consulting, put more of a premium on timeliness. *Reputation Management*, a magazine I have often picked up from the giveaway racks at airports, seems to be largely devoted to a form of secondary integrity. Bill Clinton, continually reflowered, has passed through the tertiary and quaternary stages and is well on his way to millenary integrity.

A suspension of belief in the idea that life is a one-way street has obvious moral dimensions. In the movie *Groundhog Day* the character Phil, played by Bill Murray, is caught in a time warp, condemned to live February 2 over and over again. ("Do you ever have *déjà vu*, Mrs. Lancaster?" he asks the owner of the bed-and-breakfast where he's staying. She replies, "I don't think so, but I could check with the kitchen.") In one exchange Phil explains to his co-worker Rita the feeling of abandon that has come over him, in a life cut

loose from the ordinary bonds of contingency.

RITA: I like to see a man of advancing years throwing caution to the wind. It's inspiring in a way.

PHIL: My years are not advancing as fast as you might think...

RITA: Don't you worry about cholesterol, lung cancer, love handles?

PHIL: I don't worry about anything anymore.

RITA: What makes you so special? Everybody worries about something.

PHIL: That's exactly what makes me so special. I don't even have to floss.

No one is immune from the allure of the status quo ante. What varies widely is how far people go to achieve it. The solar system itself apparently goes farther than anyone: in a cosmic version of *Groundhog Day* a large asteroid strikes our planet every so often, wiping out much of creation (600,000 more years of winter!) and rolling back evolution in the process.

My own private *Groundhog Day* comes in more modest form. I have not yet placed an order for human growth hormone, or availed myself of the "confess-and-erase" option on the Web site of the Universal Life Church. I doubt that I'll ever arrange to have myself cloned, or return to high school. But I do have a relevant experience to mention: in recent years the plots of the many mystery novels I've loved have begun to vanish from memory. This realization, at first disturbing and then oddly thrilling, came after I bought a Tony Hillerman novel, read it with pleasure—and then discovered a well-thumbed paperback of the same book on a shelf at home. The amnesia is quite pervasive: all of Jim Thompson and Elmore Leonard, Dorothy Sayers and Raymond Chandler—all of it gone. The thrill derives partly from considerations of thrift; the hundreds of mysteries I already own will now last for the rest of my life. But mostly it comes from something far more elemental. Others may see cracked spines and yellowing pages, but I see an invitation to unknown pleasures. Indeed, *Farewell, My Lovely* is flashing a come-hither look, and I approach it as if for the very first time. ■

Cullen Murphy is *The Atlantic's* managing editor.

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THE AGENDA

THIS MONTH, essays on analysis by committee at the CIA, trouble for the Republicans over sex, and battling head lice

DAVID BROOKS

"If you believe that important insights are generated by creative and well-informed individuals, then you don't need the CIA's brand of analysis; you need only consult Bernard Lewis or Samuel Huntington." PAGE 34

THOMAS BYRNE EDSALL

"Over the past several election cycles a new political configuration ... has transformed the composition of the parties and is beginning to alter their relative chances for ballot-box success. What is the force behind this transformation? In a word, sex." PAGE 36

PRIMARY SOURCES

"[Government researchers] spent several years and millions of dollars surgically enhancing—and then training—a cat to become an organic eavesdropping device. It didn't work." PAGE 38

THE WORLD IN NUMBERS

"Most people worldwide say they are fairly happy. It is debatable whether most people have ever viewed life as nasty, brutish, and short; but on balance, they don't now." PAGE 42

P. J. O'ROURKE

"Body lice can carry deadly typhus, and pubic lice breed fatal excuses. All that head lice cause is a vibrant pizzicato on the skull and an occasional secondary infection from fingernail raking." PAGE 44

WHAT NOW?

Developments, encouraging and otherwise

BY MICHAEL KELLY

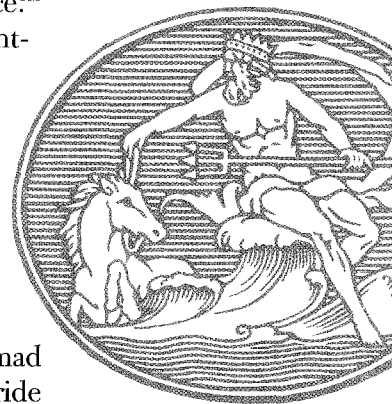
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It was recently reported that Jack B. Grubman, once a great star of the great bubble in his role as chief telecommunications analyst at Salomon Smith Barney, had, in an attempt to get his twins into Manhattan's insanely exclusive 92nd Street Y nursery school, vigorously pulled strings connected to his boss, Sanford I. Weill, the chairman of Salomon's parent company, Citigroup. After Grubman asked Weill for help, four things happened: Weill asked Grubman to take a "fresh look" at his longtime "hold" rating for AT&T, of which Weill was a director; Grubman changed his AT&T rating to "buy"; Citigroup pledged to give the 92nd Street Y \$1 million; and the junior Grubmans got into the 92nd Street Y. Summing it all up, *The New York Times* reported, accurately, that the whole thing was "a normal if somewhat distasteful part of life in New York."

Public relations-wise, it was a distasteful (although perfectly normal) few months for Islam, Religion of Peace.TM Islamic terrorists in Indonesia blew up a nightclub frequented by warmongering-through-pleasure-tripping Australians, apparently thinking it was frequented by warmongering-through-pleasure-tripping Americans, and murdered 180 mostly young and wholly innocent people. In Nigeria, which was hosting the Miss World contest, Islamic people of peace rioted after a (Christian) newspaper columnist suggested that the prophet Muhammad himself would have been happy to choose a bride from among the Miss World contestants. Some 200 people were murdered.

Meanwhile, *The Washington Post* reported that many thousands of dollars in "charitable contributions" had passed from the bank accounts of Princess Haifa al-Faisal—daughter of the late King Faisal of Saudi Arabia, and wife of Prince Bandar bin Sultan, the Saudi ambassador to the United States—to the wife of a Saudi man in San Diego, and from her husband and his friend to, it appeared, two of the hijackers of September 11, Khalid al-Midhar and Nawaf al-Hazmi.

This was particularly embarrassing in light of the previous embarrassing revelations that fifteen of the nineteen al Qaeda hijackers were Saudi citizens; that, as the Council on Foreign Relations reported in October, Saudi Arabians are the largest source of money in the world



for al Qaeda; and that, as Matthew Levitt, a former terrorism expert for the FBI and a fellow at the Institute for Near East Policy, told *The New York Times*, “more than a year into the war against terrorism, Saudi officials continue to actively support organizations that finance international terrorism,” as they have despite repeated American entreaties for many years. This was reported in a story headlined in the increasingly prevalent, inadvertently self-parodying *Times* way: “SAUDI ARABIA IS CALLED SLOW IN HELPING STEM THE FLOW OF CASH TO MILITANTS.”

And yet, in a normal if somewhat distasteful part of modern life, the Saudis were not embarrassed. Rather the contrary. Prince Bandar and Princess Haifa gave an exclusive interview to a *New York Times* reporter who was an old and friendly acquaintance (inadvertently self-parodying headline: “EXPLAINING GIFT, SAUDI ENVOY VOICES DISMAY OVER STRAINS”), in which the princess pronounced herself “outraged when people think I can be connected to terrorists when all I wanted to do was to give some help to someone in need.” Adel al-Jubeir, a senior foreign-policy adviser to Crown Prince Abdullah, the de facto Saudi ruler, and a man so smartly put together that one suspects his boxers are bespoke, held a press conference in which he complained that Saudi Arabia “has been unfairly maligned” and lectured reporters on what he called a “severe and outrageous criticism, which borders on hate.”

A previous attempt at public relations by Jubeir—a personally guided tour of the desert kingdom for the *New York Times* columnist Maureen Dowd—produced mixed results when, as Jubeir and Dowd were walking in Riyadh, members of the Islamic religious police came upon them and ordered Dowd to more fully cover herself. Also, matters were not helped when the Saudi Interior Minister, who is in charge of the kingdom’s investigation into the Saudi role in the events

of September 11, told reporters that “the Jews” (in Arabic) or “the Zionists” (in the English translation) were “the protagonists of such attacks.”

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals launched an advertising campaign on television using terrorism as a theme. The commercial shows a supermarket manager bound and gagged while an unseen terrorist threatens cowering shoppers with beating, scalding, and dismemberment. The “terrorist” is ultimately revealed to be a puppet turkey. “You’d really have to be a big grump not to see the humor in all of it,” said Lisa Lange, a PETA spokeswoman.

Al Gore finally retired himself, declaring that he was not going to run for President in 2004. The event was very Gore-ean, and in its way, rather sad. There had been weeks of wandering from camera to camera and microphone to microphone, on a book tour that sold fewer books the longer it went on. There was the appearance on *Saturday Night Live* to join in the mocking of himself and of his putative rivals for the next Democratic presidential nomination. There had been the national poll putting his “favorable rating” at 19 percent, a depth genuinely difficult for a major party leader to achieve. There had been weeks’ worth of publicly offered advice from fellow Democrats and liberal commentators, all to the effect of Don’t do it, Al. Finally there had been the trial balloon leadenly floated—the article in the newspaper reporting that friends were suddenly, surprisingly, of the opinion that Gore would not run.

After all this, there was Gore on *60 Minutes*, explaining to Lesley Stahl, who tried nobly to appear incredulous at the “stunningly surprising decision” that, at last, he had “come to closure”: he would not run; he would “explore a lot of other options.” It was a short interview—just eight minutes—and a remarkably gentle one. Stahl led Gore softly, swiftly, as painlessly as possible—more in the way of a grief therapist

than of a major media interrogator—through the script. The closest she came to touching on the unkind reality of Gore’s actual political condition was a prompt that approached the surreal in its degree of tact: “I’m still trying to understand why you’re not going to run.” Gore did not say to her, “Well, that makes one of us, ma’am.” You wish he had, though.

On November 25 George W. Bush signed the Homeland Security Bill, passed by the newly cooperative Republican Congress and authorizing the largest bureaucratic reorganization in American history. It turns out that someone had tucked into a nook or cranny of the great beast a little parasite of a provision that will allow the pharmaceutical company Eli Lilly to perhaps get dismissed—or at least to hamper—lawsuits by parents who claim that the preservative thimerosal, used in Lilly vaccines, caused autism in their children. It could not be discovered who had stuck the thing in. “It’s a mystery to us how it got in there,” said the pleasantly amused and not at all grumpy Eli Lilly spokesman Rob Smith.

Finally, an unprecedented international public-opinion survey for the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, involving 38,000 respondents in forty-four countries, found, as *The New York Times* reported in a passing sentence in the eighth paragraph of a story on page A22, that “throughout Europe, at least two-thirds of the public” support the Bush-led U.S. campaign against terrorism. In Britain (where, as has been heavily reported, the intellectual elite is solidly opposed to the American war) 75 percent of the public, and in Germany (where, as has also been heavily reported, both the elite and the government are solidly opposed) 61 percent of the public, had “favorable views of the United States.” The inadvertently self-parodying *Times* headline: “WORLD SURVEY SAYS NEGATIVE VIEWS OF U.S. ARE RISING.” ■

Michael Kelly is editor at large of The Atlantic.

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THE ELEPHANTIASIS OF REASON

The CIA's brand of rational analysis is perpetually half right in a way that makes it completely wrong

In 2000 the CIA produced a report called *Global Trends 2015*, in which it predicted what the world would be like during the next decade and a half. No, the report did not predict the events of September 11, and nobody blames it for that. But neither did it give any prominence to the atmosphere of hatred that produced September 11. Nor did it predict the radically different ways in which the United States, Western Europe, and the Arab world would perceive international conflict. Indeed, the world it describes doesn't resemble any possible real world. Using the CIA's methodology and analysis, you can neither anticipate the future nor explain the past.

There are no human beings in the world described by the CIA. There are no passions or religious ideals, no dreams or urges, no altruism or malevolence. Instead there are only impersonal forces: technological developments, economic trends, and demographic pressures. *Global Trends 2015* is perpetually half right in a way that makes it completely wrong. Yes, technological and environmental trends are important. But if you try to describe them in a void uncomplicated by human volition, you end up in the realm of fantasy.

The report opens with a description of fifteen governmental and non-governmental conferences and workshops that were involved in preparing it. Reading it, you begin to picture the bureaucratic machinery, homogenizing the insights of hundreds of intelligent people. The heart sinks. Then comes a list of the seven key "drivers" that will shape the world of 2015: demographics, natural resources and environment, science and technology, the global economy and globalization, national and international governance, future conflict, the role of the United States. These drivers fall into two categories: those that can be quantified, and are

thus much fussed over by CIA analysts, and those that are so vague as to be meaningless ("future conflict"), and are thus used as receptacles for all those mysterious things that can't be subjected to rational analysis.

For page upon page the report lists the features of years to come, most of the predictions entirely reasonable and unsurprising ("Ukraine's path to the West will be constrained by widespread corruption, the power of criminal organizations, and lingering questions over its commitment to the rule of law"). Some of them, if read with the benefit of hindsight, do seem vaguely prophetic, if unremarkable ("Linear trend analysis shows little positive change in [the Middle East], raising the prospects for increased demographic pressures, social unrest, religious and ideological extremism, and terrorism directed both at the regimes and at their Western supporters"). But the committee of authors links dozens of trends in a great bureaucratic string. There is no central thesis, nothing to focus the attention, nothing that would help a President or a citizen decide whether or not to seek regime change in Iraq, or predict how the rest of the world would react to such an event, or really understand the nature of al Qaeda, the Arab masses, the French elite, or any other players in the world.

At the end of *Global Trends 2015* four scenarios for the world in 2015 are sketched out. The first is "Inclusive Globalization," in which "a virtuous circle develops among technology, economic growth, demographic factors and effective governance, which enables a majority of the world's people to benefit from globalization." The second is "Pernicious Globalization," in which global inequality widens. The third, called "Regional Competition," features trade wars and other conflicts among Europe, East Asia, and the United States. And the fourth, "Post-

Polar World," is a world in which the U.S. economy stagnates and the international order fragments chaotically.

Now, any halfway intelligent person could have come up with these scenarios after five minutes of thought. Any halfway intelligent person, however, would also have discarded the enterprise, aware that men and women are not lab rats. People change history in ways that are simply not knowable by technocratic linear analysis.

But this is the CIA. Its research culture was established in the late 1940s, by an intelligence expert named Sherman Kent, who after World War II headed the CIA's Office of National Estimates. Kent was operating at a time when faith in the power of social science was at its peak. Urban planners thought they could organize cities on rationalistic grounds. Economists thought they could master economic forces with models and macro-economic planning.

Kent dreamed of turning intelligence analysis into a rigorous science. In his influential book, *Strategic Intelligence for American World Policy* (1949), he argued,

We insist, and have insisted for generations, that truth is to be approached, if not attained, through research guided by a systematic method. In the social sciences which very largely constitute the subject matter of strategic intelligence, there is such a method. It is much like the method of the physical sciences. It is not the same method but it is a method nonetheless.

Thus the CIA was set apart as an independent (at least in theory) professional think tank, in Langley, Virginia. The Agency is still mostly a research center, staffed by social scientists with advanced degrees. Over the past few years, when I have run into former CIA people, I have asked them if they had access when they were inside to a whole layer of secret information denied to the rest of the world. No, they invariably respond,

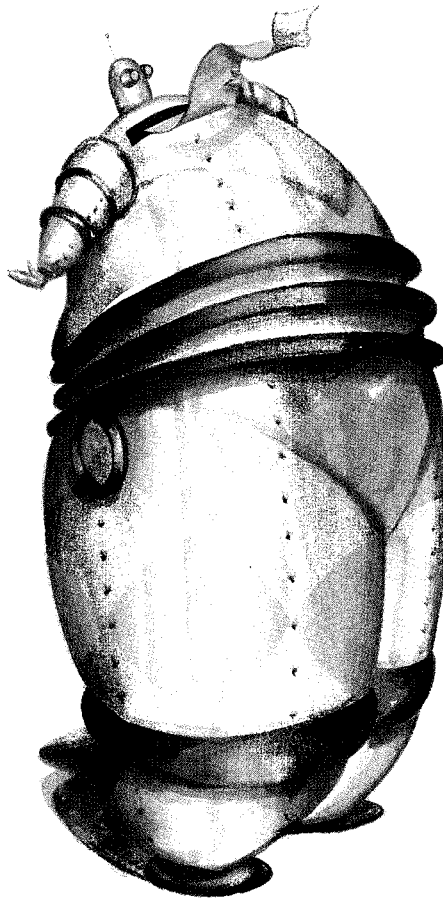
IDEAS
**DAVID
BROOKS**

what they had was the CIA's "brand of analysis." But if you believe that important insights are generated by creative and well-informed individuals, then you don't need the CIA's brand of analysis; you need only consult Bernard Lewis or Samuel Huntington.

With few secure patrons, the Agency has clung to its claim of social-scientific objectivity as a source of authority and a justification for existence. Only the CIA, its proponents argue, can do the sort of sophisticated modeling and probability calculation that the government needs. But because it is a government bureaucracy, the only kind of thinking it really can engage in is bureaucratic thinking: systematic, codified, and cautious.

I am about to mention a few of the notorious instances in which the CIA got things spectacularly wrong. But it must be said first that intelligence is difficult, and that *all* intelligence bureaus get things spectacularly wrong much of the time. So even if the CIA did fail to predict, among other things, North Korea's invasion of South Korea, the Soviet intention to install missiles in Cuba, and India's testing of a nuclear device in 1998, it has nonetheless proved to be pretty good at keeping track of where enemy armies are hiding.

The really lamentable errors flow from the social scientist's mentality, which, as Irving Kristol once put it, represents the elephantiasis of reason. Social scientists are suckers for data, hard numbers they can crunch and graph. The CIA analysts believed the Soviets' economic statistics, and in 1961 they predicted that the Soviet economy would be three times the size of the U.S. economy by 2000. More important, many social scientists unconsciously assume that human beings are rational game players. Thus CIA analysts are always imagining that foreign dictators will behave as they—



social scientists with Ph.D.s and homes in suburban Virginia—would behave in similar circumstances. If people are *not* wholly rational, then the entire technocratic brand of analysis falls apart.

During the Cold War, CIA analysts figured that it wasn't rational for the USSR to overspend on defense, so they radically misjudged Soviet military spending. They couldn't see why the Soviets would try to get first-strike nuclear capability, so they missed that, too. They predicted that the USSR would not invade Afghanistan—surely it had learned the lessons of Vietnam. Similarly, they predicted that the Chinese would not intervene in Korea, because that wasn't the rational course of action. They underestimated the number of nations that would get involved in state-sponsored terrorism, because the risk-to-reward ratios were wrong.

The CIA has continually misjudged the appetites of voracious tyrants like Saddam Hussein. In 1989 the Agency concluded that Iraq was exhausted by its war with Iran, and

would not launch another war. Then came Kuwait. The Agency largely missed Saddam's first nuclear-weapons program (the one that was uncovered after Desert Storm)—why would a cash-strapped leader devote himself so fanatically to such a goal? CIA analysts tend to assume that every foreign dictator or leader will be deterred by U.S. military preponderance because, after all, that's the rational reaction. At their worst Agency analysts seem to ignore, downplay, or actively avoid evidence that disproves their assumptions. The CIA has been mysteriously slow to interview al Qaeda operatives held in northern Iraq, for example, perhaps because to ask questions might invite revelations that, contrary to Agency claims, Saddam is involved in al Qaeda-sponsored terrorism.

The problem with the CIA's brand of analysis, of course, is that human beings believe things and feel passions. They have visions of a future world and are often willing to sacrifice themselves, or at least to take amazing risks, to bring those visions about. Their gauge of reality can be radically different from that of a cool scholar at an antiseptic research campus.

I've heard since September 11 that CIA analysts now really do understand Islamic extremism. And in fact, *Global Trends 2015* represents an effort to get intelligence analysts outside the CIA involved in the Agency's thinking. But bureaucracies just don't think well. Propelled by their "scientific" training and their desire to quantify, intelligence technocrats find themselves modeling further and further into abstraction, leaving behind the lessons of history, the clash of ideas, the passions of the soul—all those things that can't be rationalized but are the real drivers of human affairs. ■

David Brooks, an Atlantic correspondent, is also a contributing editor of Newsweek, a senior editor of The Weekly Standard, and a political analyst for The NewsHour With Jim Lehrer.

BLUE MOVIE

The "morality gap" is becoming the key variable in American politics

Early in the 1996 election campaign Dick Morris and Mark Penn, two of Bill Clinton's advisers, discovered a polling technique that proved to be one of the best ways of determining whether a voter was more likely to choose Clinton or Bob Dole for President. Respondents were asked five questions, four of which tested attitudes toward sex: Do you believe homosexuality is morally wrong? Do you ever personally look at pornography? Would you look down on someone who had an affair while married? Do you believe sex before marriage is morally wrong? The fifth question was whether religion was very important in the voter's life.

Respondents who took the "liberal" stand on three of the five questions supported Clinton over Dole by a two-to-one ratio; those who took a liberal stand on four or five questions were, not surprisingly, even more likely to support Clinton. The same was true in reverse for those who took a "conservative" stand on three or more of the questions. (Someone taking the liberal position, as pollsters define it, dismisses the idea that homosexuality is morally wrong, admits to looking at pornography, doesn't look down on a married person having an affair, regards sex before marriage as morally acceptable, and views religion as not a very important part of daily life.) According to Morris and Penn, these questions were better vote predictors—and better indicators of partisan inclination—than anything else except party affiliation or the race of the voter (black voters are overwhelmingly Democratic).

It is an axiom of American politics that people vote their pocketbooks, and for seventy years the key political divisions in the United States were indeed economic. The Democratic and Republican Parties were aligned, as a general rule, with different economic interests. Electoral fortunes rose and fell with

economic cycles. But over the past several elections a new political configuration has begun to emerge—one that has transformed the composition of the parties and is beginning to alter their relative chances for ballot-box success. What is the force behind this transformation? In a word, sex.

POLITICS
**THOMAS BYRNE
EDSALL**

Whereas elections once pitted the party of the working class against the party of Wall Street, they now pit voters who believe in a fixed and universal morality

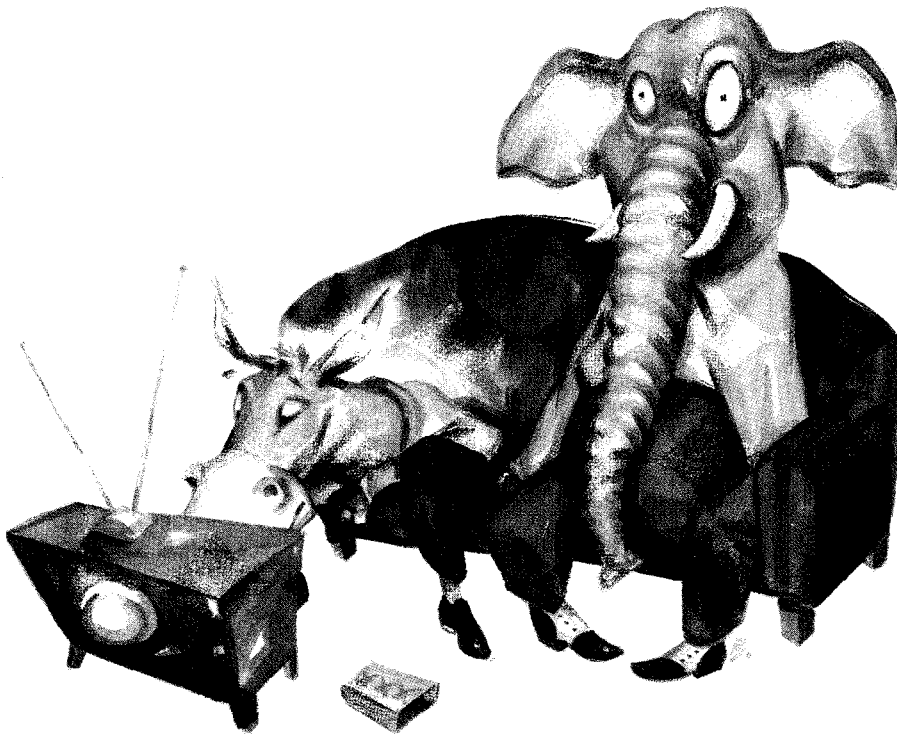
against those who see moral issues, especially sexual ones, as elastic and subject to personal choice. Just after the 2000 election a map showing the percentages of porn movies in the home-video market state by state "bore an eerie resemblance to Tuesday night's results," as Pete du Pont, the former Republican governor of Delaware, put it in a column he wrote for the *Wall Street Journal* Web site. "Mr. Gore carried the areas with the highest percentages [of sex movies in the video market] ... Mr. Bush carried the area[s] with the lowest percentage." (If nothing else, this correlates with Morris and Penn's finding that Democratic voters generally are more likely to look at pornography.)

The 2000 election revealed remnants of the old New Deal alignments: people making \$15,000 to \$30,000 voted for Gore over Bush by a 13-point margin, according to Voter News Service (VNS) exit polls, while those making more than \$100,000 voted for Bush over Gore by an 11-point margin. But among the 14 percent of voters who attend religious services more than once a week, Bush held a powerful 27-point margin (63 to 36 percent), whereas the 14 percent of voters who never attend services backed Gore by a margin of 29 points (61 to 32 percent). The 23 percent of voters who say that abortion should "always" be legal backed Gore over Bush by an extraordinary 45-point margin (70 to 25 percent); the 13 percent of voters who think abortion

should "always" be illegal were even more decisively for Bush, by 52 points (74 to 22 percent). Compare these differences with the ones that used to create the major dividing line between the parties: voters calling themselves "working-class" went for Gore by only 51 to 46 percent, whereas those calling themselves "upper-middle-class" tilted slightly toward Bush, by 54 to 43 percent. Meanwhile, the four percent of voters who consider themselves "upper-class" went for Gore by 56 to 39 percent. In the 2000 election even one's view of Hillary Clinton proved to be a far stronger predictor of one's vote than such historically accurate barometers as social class and education level.

If Red and Blue America are now divided most strongly by sexual and moral values, what does this mean for elections in the years ahead? The 2002 elections, of course, were a great triumph for the Republicans, who gained seats in both the House and the Senate—a rare midterm-election feat for the party that holds the presidency (in fact, this was the first time since 1902 that the Republicans had accomplished it while holding the presidency). But the elections were dominated not by sexual or moral values but, rather, by the one thing that trumps sex: war. As long as a terrorist attack is a serious threat, war talk will dominate elections. But sex, unlike war, does not go away; its return to political center stage is inevitable. And that is decidedly to the Democrats' advantage.

In a 1998 paper on American sexual behavior Tom W. Smith, the director of the General Social Survey of the National Opinion Research Center, at the University of Chicago, found that among people born before 1910, 61 percent of the men and just 12 percent of the women reported having had sex before marriage. These percentages have grown through the generations, much more dramatically among women than among men. Ninety percent of the men born in the 1940s had sex before marriage, as



did 63 percent of the women. And of the women born since 1952, only 20 percent reported having been virgins when they married. Many women—and many men, too—cherish the rights that fall under the post-1960s rubric of autonomy and personal freedom, strongly valuing their sexual and reproductive independence. They are willing to vote based on this cluster of issues—and when they do, they vote Democratic.

The demographic reality is that as currently constituted, liberal Blue America is growing and conservative Red America is in decline. Take church attendance. Exit polls in 2000 showed that the more often a voter attended religious services, the more likely he or she would be to cast a ballot for the Republican Party. But long-range trends in religiosity (the term sociologists use for “depth or intensity of religiousness”), as measured by the National Election Studies polling series on church attendance, do not favor the Republicans. From 1972 to 2000 the proportion of voters who said they attended services every week dropped from 38 to 25 percent. The proportion who said they went “almost” every week

remained nearly constant at 11 to 12 percent, and the proportion who attended “once or twice a month” rose only slightly, from 12 percent to 16 percent. The proportion who attended just “a few times a year” dropped from 30 to 16 percent. The one group that has grown dramatically consists of those who never go to church or synagogue. This group, which has become a mainstay of liberal politics, made up just 11 percent of the population in 1972 but 33 percent in 2000.

Thus if the Republican Party hopes to build on its 2002 gains, it must continue to mute its social conservatism when speaking to the public. President Bush did just that at a press conference right after the November election, when he pointedly ignored a question about whether social conservatives should “push for new restrictions on abortion,” instead focusing on issues of national security. In that press conference he used the words “war,” “threat,” “terror,” “terrorism,” “terrorists,” and “nuclear” a total of forty-five times.

Many House and Senate Republicans, however, are eager to revive a conservative social agenda. In order to

keep his party ascendant Bush will have to hold in check both the Senate majority leader Trent Lott, who has already promised to bring to the floor legislation banning so-called partial-birth abortion, and the House majority leader Tom DeLay, an adamant opponent of abortion rights. (Currently, congressional conservatives are seriously promoting at least three anti-abortion bills.) Bush and his strategists are fully aware that positioning the Republican Party as the party of sexual repression would be devastating to its electoral prospects—but the conservative right is not likely to accede to further delay of its agenda after years of waiting for action under Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush. For this reason judicial appointments will also present a major challenge for Bush, because social conservatives consider the federal judiciary to be the prime vehicle for reversing the sexual revolution.

As long as al Qaeda and Iraq dominate the news, the Republicans will be able to maintain their slight advantage. But should war fade into the background, or as soon as emboldened congressional Republicans begin moving to restrict Americans’ sexual autonomy, the currently weakened Democratic Party will be positioned to push back with the kind of vitality that propelled Bill Clinton to victory in 1992 and 1996. Lest 1996 seem like ancient history to Republicans, they should recall that more-recent elections demonstrated the power of the electorate’s new morality quite vividly: in both 1998 and 2000 (the former a midterm election, when the presidential party traditionally loses ground in Congress) the Democrats gained seats in the House. And these gains came despite—and perhaps because of (insofar as they represented a reaction against the Republican-led drive to impeach Bill Clinton)—their following soon after the most explicit sex scandal in the history of the Oval Office. ■

Thomas Byrne Edsall, a political reporter at The Washington Post, is the author of Power and Money (1988) and Chain Reaction (1991).

PRIMARY SOURCES

Selections from recent reports, studies, and other documents. This month: Misplacing New Jersey; Uday Hussein's torture chamber; how al Qaeda pays its bills; the Teamsters whack the mob

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Render Unto al Qaeda

Last October, just weeks before the wife of the Saudi ambassador was discovered to have given money to a Saudi woman in California that eventually made its way into the hands of two of the September 11 hijackers, the Council on Foreign Relations released a report that evaluated American efforts to impede global flows of terrorist financing. The report revealed the degree to which the al Qaeda financial network remains intact and well funded through such sources as the underground *hawala* system; direct gifts from wealthy Persian Gulf Arabs; misappropriations by fundamentalist clerics of *zakat*, the donations (at least 2.5 percent of income, according to Islamic custom) that Muslims give to charity; profits from outwardly legitimate businesses, such as the honey trade in Yemen; heroin trafficking; and simple theft and other petty crime by local cells. The report is unsparing in its criticism of Saudi Arabia:

☞ *Al-Qaeda differs from traditional state-sponsored terrorist groups in one critical way: it is financially robust ... Indeed, when it was headquartered in Sudan and then Afghanistan, the al-Qaeda terrorist organization provided important financial support to its host state—instead of the other way around ... It is worth stating clearly and unambiguously what official U.S. government spokespersons have not: For years, individuals and charities based in Saudi Arabia have been the most important source of funds for al-Qaeda; and for years, Saudi officials have turned a blind eye to this problem.*

—“Terrorist Financing”
(www.cfr.org/pubs.php?type=10)

Torture in Iraq

Great Britain's Foreign & Commonwealth Office has released a report revealing that in 2000 Saddam Hussein approved amputation of the tongue as a penalty for abusive remarks about him or his

family, and that he has broadcast TV pictures of this punishment as a warning to would-be dissenters; that Saddam's son Uday maintained a private torture chamber called “the Red Room” in a building disguised as an electrical-power plant along the Tigris River; that Saddam's army retains “professional rapists”; and that inmates in the “casket prison” in Baghdad are kept “in rows of rectangular steel boxes, as found in mortuaries,” which are opened for only half an hour a day until the inmates either confess to crimes or die.

—“Saddam Hussein: Crimes and Human Rights Abuses” (www.fco.gov.uk/Files/kfile/hrdossier.pdf)

Project Acoustic Kitty

Included in a passel of CIA documents recently declassified through a Freedom of Information Act request was a heavily redacted memo from 1967 titled “[deleted] Views on Trained Cats [deleted] for [deleted] Use.” Evidently the CIA's Directorate of Science and Technology spent several years and (supposedly) millions of dollars surgically enhancing—and then training—a cat to become an organic eavesdropping device. It didn't work. Operatives “slit the cat open, put batteries in him, wired him up,” according to what Victor Marchetti, a former CIA officer, told the *London Daily Telegraph* not long ago. “The tail was used as an antenna ...

They found he would walk off the job when he got hungry, so they put another wire in to override that.” Finally, they “put him out of the van, and a taxi comes and runs him over.” The memo concludes that in a “real foreign situation” the cat “would not be practical.” Nevertheless,

☞ *We have satisfied ourselves that it is indeed possible [deleted]. This is in itself a remarkable scientific achievement. Knowing that cats can indeed be trained to move short distances [deleted] we see no reason to believe that a [deleted] cat can not be similarly trained to approach*

[deleted] ... The work done on this problem over the years reflects great credit on the personnel who guided it, particularly [deleted], whose energy and imagination could be models for scientific pioneers.

—The National Security Archive
(www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB54/)

THE NATION

Lies and Consequences

“For as long as human beings have deceived each other, people have tried to develop techniques for detecting deception and finding truth.” So begins a new report from the National Research Council, which—in the context of heightened concerns about national security—was charged with evaluating how effective lie-detector tests are at ferreting out deceptive people and security risks from government and private industry. Unfortunately, as this comprehensive report makes clear, polygraphs are not very effective. The test relies on 1920s-era technology and generates large numbers of both false positives and false negatives—that is, it identifies many truth-tellers as liars and many liars as truth-tellers. The report concludes that the polygraph's use at various federal agencies—such as the Department of Energy and the FBI, which have each tested tens of thousands of employees and job applicants—is badly flawed.

☞ *Polygraph screening protocols that can identify a large fraction of serious security violators can be expected to incorrectly implicate at least hundreds, and perhaps thousands, of innocent employees for each spy or other serious security violator correctly identified ... Polygraph testing yields an unacceptable choice for DOE employee security screening between too many loyal employees falsely judged deceptive and too many major security threats left undetected.*

—“The Polygraph and Lie Detection”
(www4.nas.edu/news.nsf/isbn/0309084369?OpenDocument)



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No Longer Cosa Nostra

It took 641 pages, but a recent report prepared by a blue-ribbon panel of former prosecutors, former FBI agents, and labor leaders has pronounced the International Brotherhood of Teamsters finally free—or almost free—of mob corruption. In this lengthy account the former federal prosecutor Edwin Stier and his team declare that the Teamsters can be taken out of what was, in effect, moral receivership. The report makes compelling reading—think Mario Puzo as bureaucrat. It reviews the history of Mafia involvement in the union and details what made the Teamsters so susceptible to corruption. Factors include the growing national influence of the Cosa Nostra crime syndicate through the middle part of the century, low profit margins in trucking, rising economic pressures on semi-skilled workers, the autonomy of Teamster locals, and laziness and corruption in both local businesses and local government. No word on where Jimmy Hoffa is buried.

—“The Teamsters: Perception and Reality, An Investigative Study of Organized Crime Influence in the Union” (www.hoffa-macknow.com/Teamsters-Perception%20and%20Reality.pdf)

SOCIETY

Holding Penalty

The lawyer Johnnie Cochran, ever in search of the spotlight and a racial cause to champion, found both this past fall when he and another lawyer, Cyrus Mehri, issued their report on black coaches in the National Football League. Drawing on the assistance of Janice Madden, a labor economist at the University of Pennsylvania, Cochran and Mehri studied whether the under-representation of African-Americans in coaching and the front office (especially relative to their numbers among NFL players) could

be explained as the result of poor performance by African-Americans. The answer, perhaps not unexpectedly, was no.

“Dr. Madden determined that: the black coaches [over the last fifteen years] averaged 1.1 more wins per [sixteen-game] season than the white coaches; the black coaches led their teams to the playoffs 67% of the time versus 39% of the time for the white coaches; in their first season, black coaches averaged 2.7 more wins than the white coaches in their first season; in their final season, terminated black coaches win an average of 1.3 more games than terminated white coaches.

—“Black Coaches in the National Football League: Superior Performance, Inferior Opportunities” (www.findjustice.com/ms/nfl/index.html)

Tallahassee, Connecticut

In 1988 the National Geographic Society conducted an extensive survey to determine what Americans knew about geography. Not much, as it turned out. Last year National Geographic (in conjunction with the market-research firm RoperASW) conducted a follow-up study to see if Americans’ geographic literacy had improved over the intervening fourteen years. Unsurprisingly, it hadn’t. Despite recent events fewer than one in five Americans aged eighteen to twenty-four could locate Afghanistan on a world map, and only one in seven could locate Iraq on a map of the Middle East and Asia. Nor did Americans have much success in identifying U.S. states: barely half could find New York, and only a third could find New Jersey. Worst of all, 10 percent of Americans could not find the United States on a world map. And although it provides little solace to consider some of the strange lacunae in Europeans’ knowledge (for instance, despite the 355-mile border between Germany

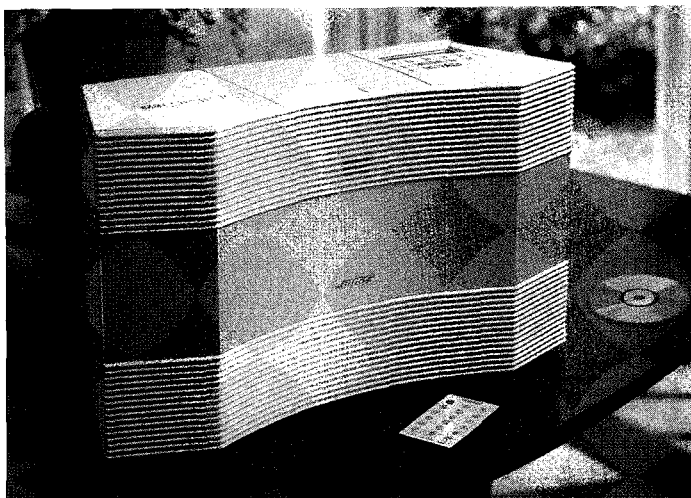
and the Netherlands, nearly a third of Germans couldn’t identify the latter—which they seemed to locate just fine in 1940), Americans can take heart from this: more than a third of young adults in the United States were able to place the island used for the fourth season of the television series *Survivor* in the South Pacific.

—National Geographic–Roper 2002 Global Geographic Literacy Survey (www.nationalgeographic.com/geosurvey/index.html)

Your Ad Here

According to a new report by a professor of education policy at Arizona State University, there were four and a half times more commercial incursions into schools in 2001–2002 than there were in 1990–1991. Some examples from the report: In Brooklawn, New Jersey, the school superintendent not only has agreed to put the name of a supermarket, ShopRite, on a new school gym for \$100,000 but also has appointed a “Director of Corporate Development” and “assigned him to sell naming rights for everything from baseball field foul lines to the school’s proposed new library”; Home Team Marketing, a sports marketing company near Cleveland, has created a network of Ohio schools that it is planning to market as a single block to corporations seeking to advertise; a company called Field Trip Factory will provide free trips for students to commercial establishments such as pet stores “in the name of teaching about academic subjects such as ‘animal welfare’”; and a school district in Omaha, Nebraska, plans to rip up the floor of its high school gym and replace it with a new floor covered with up to ten corporate logos, each of which will be sold for \$10,000.

—“What’s in a Name? The Corporate Branding of America’s Schools” (www.asu.edu/educ/epsl/CERU/Annual%20reports/EPsl-0209-103-CERU.pdf)



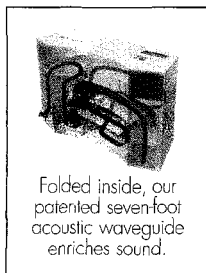
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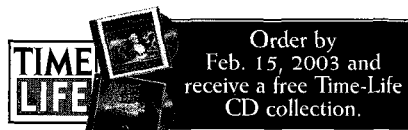
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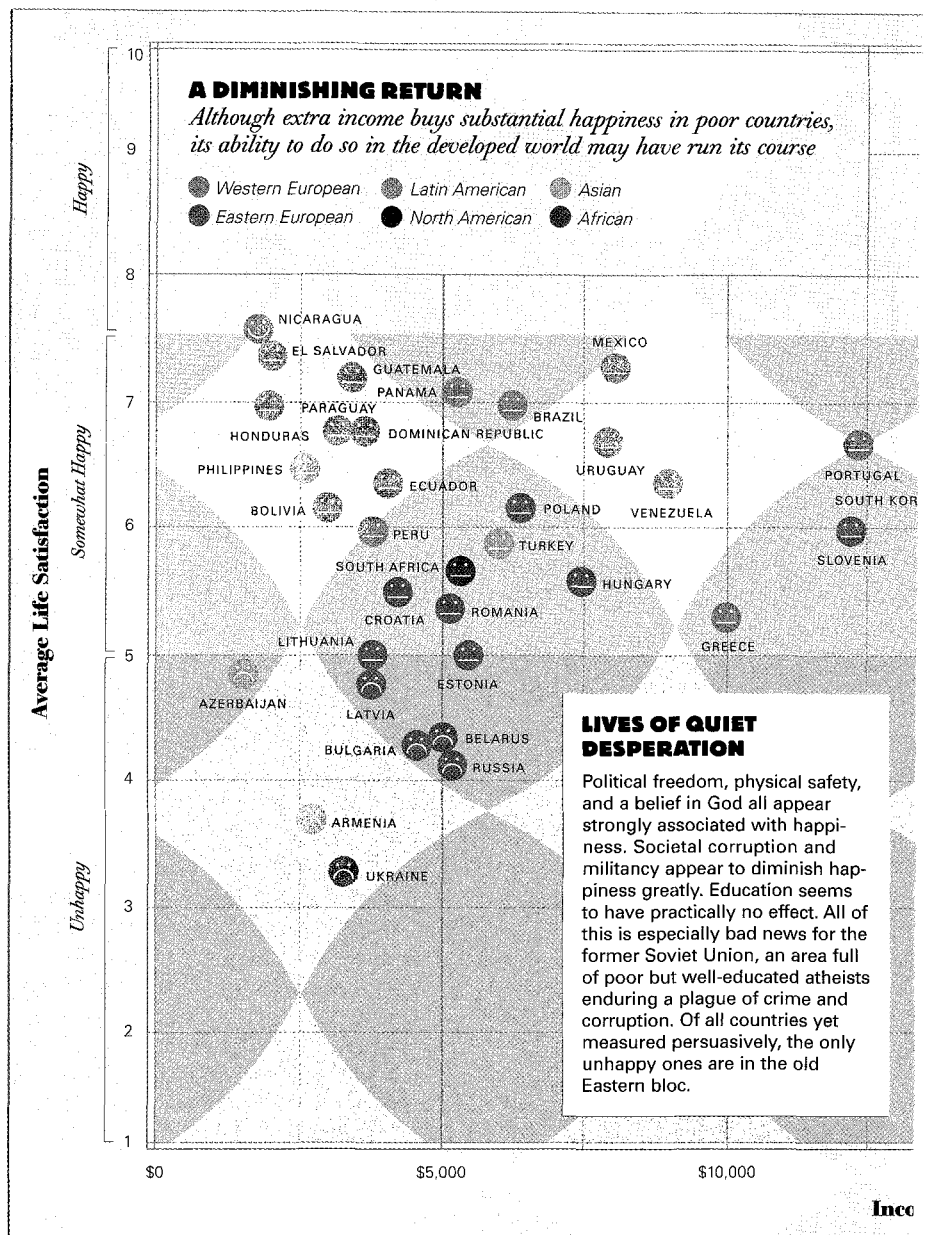
DOES MONEY BUY HAPPINESS?

In most of the world, yes. In the United States, however, not anymore

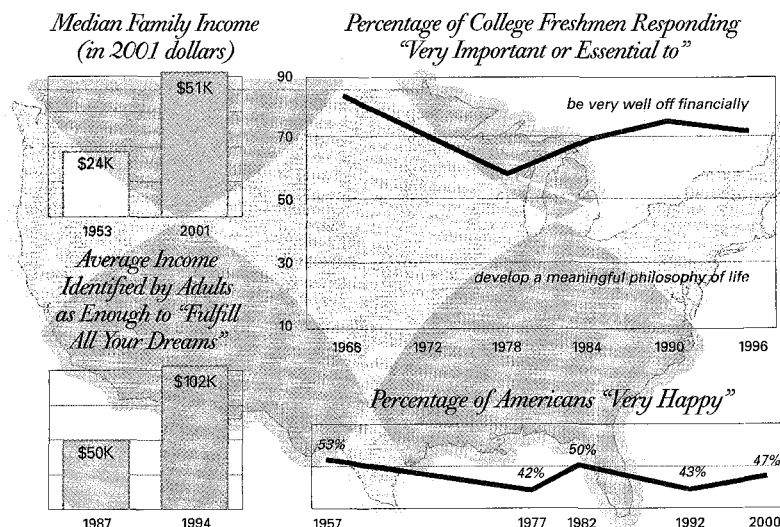
Historically the province of philosophers and theologians, the relationship between wealth and happiness has recently been taken up by a cadre of social scientists seeking to quantify and compare levels of well-being worldwide.

The results of their research, thus far, are clear: money does buy happiness—but only to a point. Study after study shows that the inhabitants of richer countries are, on average, significantly happier than those of poorer ones. This is true even controlling for other variables that rise with income and that may influence personal happiness: education, political freedom, women's rights, and so forth. National income appears to be one of the best single predictors of overall well-being, explaining perhaps 40 percent of the difference in contentment among nations. For individual countries, with few exceptions, self-reported happiness has increased as incomes have risen.

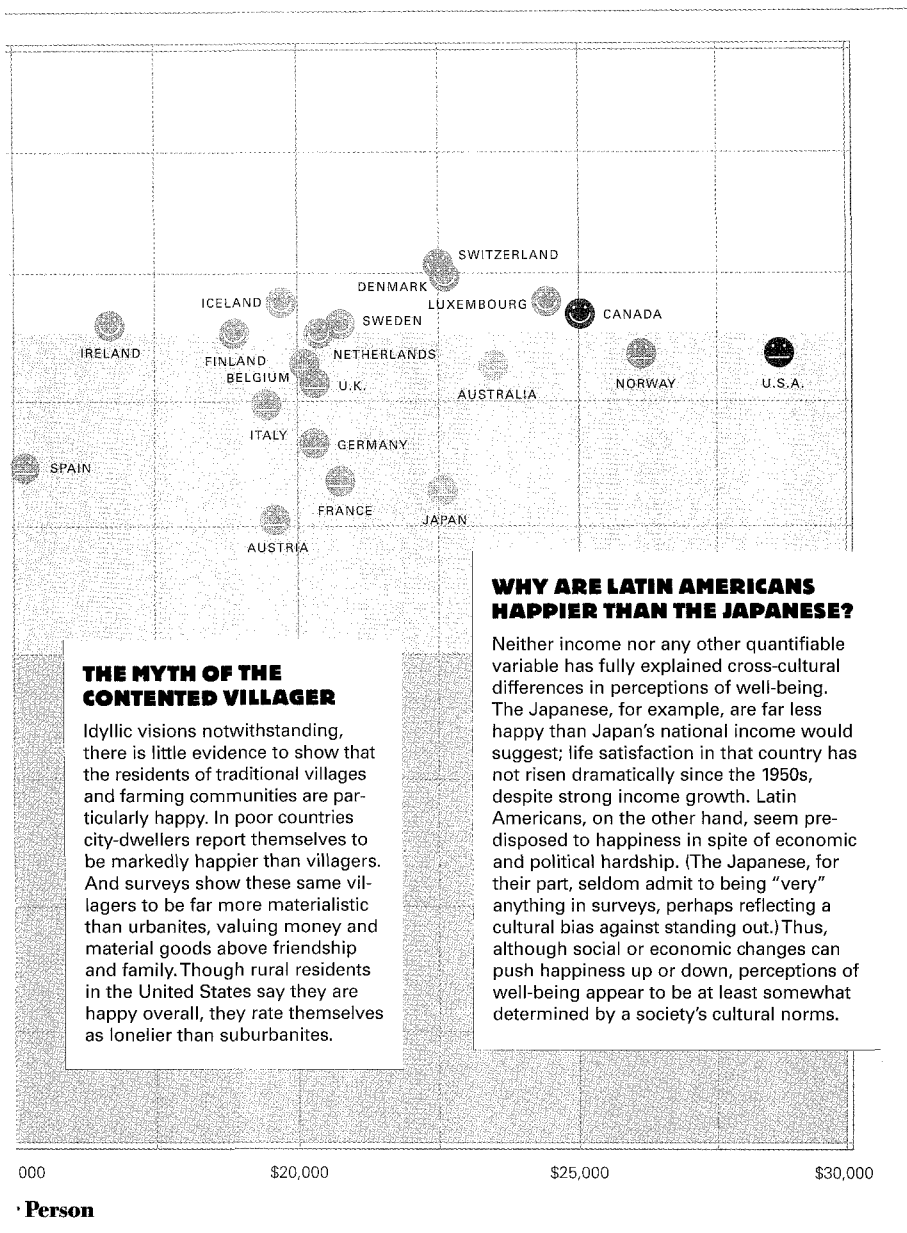
The chart to the right shows survey data on happiness for fifty-four countries, compiled throughout the 1990s by the Dutch sociologist Ruut Veenhoven. These data indicate a robust, if inexact, relationship between per capita income and "life satisfaction." Veenhoven's find-



AMERICANS INCREASINGLY MATERIALISTIC, BUT NOT HAPPIER



ings provide an unexpectedly sunny view. First, they indicate that most people worldwide say they are fairly happy. It is debatable whether most people have ever viewed life as nasty, brutish, and short; but on balance, they don't now. (Even citizens of impoverished or politically star-crossed countries, such as the Philippines and Romania, or of countries with high levels of income inequality, such as Brazil and the United States, report being at least somewhat happy on average.) Moreover, though the fact that richer countries are in general happier than poorer ones may not seem terribly surprising, it does suggest that continuing economic development will generate rising happiness worldwide.



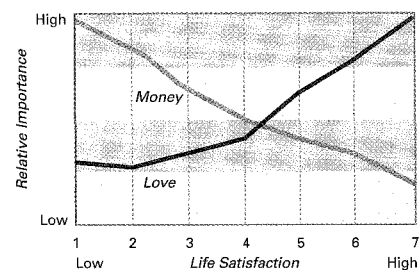
That said, there are clear limits to what money can buy. Although improvements in income produce large improvements in happiness for poor countries—gains that continue to rise with income well above the level where basic food, shelter, and sanitation needs have been met—the law of diminishing returns takes effect at higher income levels. Above about \$20,000 per capita, increases in wealth yield at best minimal increases in happiness. This effect takes place at both the individual and the societal level. In poor societies those at the top of the socioeconomic ladder are significantly happier than those at the bottom; in highly developed societies there is little class difference in

happiness. (In fact, oddly, in wealthy nations both those in the top 10 percent of the socioeconomic spectrum and those in the bottom 50 percent appear to be slightly happier, on average, than those in between.)

Robert E. Lane, a political scientist at Yale, argues that the leveling off of happiness in wealthy societies reflects more than just diminishing returns. Lane suggests that happiness is derived largely from two sources—material comfort, and social and familial intimacy—that are often incompatible. Economic development increases material comfort, but it systematically weakens social and familial ties by encouraging mobility, commercializing relationships, and

LOVE & MONEY

People who value money highly tend to be less happy than those who value love



attenuating the bonds of both the extended and the nuclear family. In less developed countries, where social ties are often strong and money is scarce, this tradeoff works overwhelmingly to society's advantage—the gains in material comfort more than outweigh the slight declines in social connectedness. At some point, however, the balance tips and the happiness-diminishing effects of reduced social stability begin to outweigh the happiness-increasing effects of material gain. Lane believes that the United States has passed this tipping point, and that we will actually become unhappier as incomes rise further.

Lane's argument is controversial. It is unclear that happiness is actually falling in the United States. Clinical depression is rising, which Lane cites as one basis for his argument, but it still afflicts only a small percentage of the population. Nonetheless, it is true that happiness in the United States has not risen over the past fifty years, despite an average increase of more than 85 percent in the real value of family income. And although the weakening of the relationship between money and contentment perhaps ought to have induced Americans to look elsewhere for sources of happiness, that hasn't happened. Indeed, as the graphs on the lower left show, Americans have become *more* materialistic over the past three decades.

The Western notion of progress was shaped during a centuries-long period when rising wealth almost certainly bought rising happiness. Only recently have we left that era behind—and our society has not yet adjusted. Conditioned to value financial achievement, we may cling to materialism even as it makes the contentment we seek more elusive. —DON PECK AND ROSS DOUTHAT

THE LOUSE IS IN THE HOUSE

A malady that dare not speak its name

America gives every appearance of being a nation besotted with trashiness—divorce, illegitimacy, casual Fridays. The murder rate in the cities is rising again. Anna Nicole Smith is back for a second season on cable TV. But recent experience argues that this love for the dirty and the vulgar is only skin deep, so to speak. Social critics shouldn't nitpick—at least not figuratively.

Our country has an enormous stockpile of bourgeois propriety, highly refined bourgeois propriety. In fact, it is weapons-grade, as verified by the detonation of me at our house when our five-year-old daughter was sent home from pre-K because she had head lice.

"How could *my daughter* get lice?" I shouted (out of daughter's earshot, of course, for propriety's sake). "It's a *private* school!"

"They let *us* in," my wife said. And possibly our head lice, too. On inspection our two-year-old daughter—who does not go to school—proved to be even more populated than her older sister.

"Where would *my baby* get lice?" I shouted.

"At the country club?" my wife said. "It's a *private* club!"

"They let *us* in," my wife said.

I felt a blush of shame creep across my face, not to mention what I felt creep across my scalp. None of the six motor vehicles in our yard is actually up on blocks. We have a huge satellite dish, but that's from a couple of marriages ago. I defy anyone to call the O'Rourkes trashy, now that my nephew is out of prison. And my wife's family was on the Mayflower (Van Lines). The piano was always moved in a well-bred fashion.

"Oh, hush—and quit clawing at yourself," said my wife, who was consulting *The AMA Home Medical Encyclopedia*. "Children," she read aloud, "are most affected, women occasionally, and ..."—it figures—"men rarely."

AT LARGE

**P. J.
O'ROURKE**

The head louse, *Pediculus humanus capitis*, is a cousin of the body and pubic lice that truly are indicative of trash. The former live in filthy clothing, and the latter are the result of reading Kahlil Gibran by lava lamp and cavorting on a waterbed. But the head louse is different. The American

Academy of Pediatrics, *The Merck Manual of Diagnosis and Therapy*, the *New England Journal of Medicine*, and the Harvard School of Public Health say, respectively, "All socioeconomic groups are affected"; "It is common among school children, without regard to social status"; "[It] affects persons of all ... socio-economic backgrounds"; and "Head lice ... do not respect socio-economic class distinctions." One need not scratch one's head about the repeated mentions of status. The *New England Journal of Medicine* notes, "Most children get them at some point, including doctors' children."

The adult head louse is usually described as being the size of a sesame seed. But a sesame seed stuck between teeth is visible at ten yards, whereas to my bifocaled eyes lice are ...

"I think I have lice all over my shoes."

"Those are the holes in your wing-tips," my wife said.

The female louse lays one to six nits a day, according to the *NEJM*. She lays ten nits a day, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics. The nits hatch in three to fourteen days, claims *The Merck Manual*; in ten to fourteen days, maintains the Academy of Pediatrics; in about a week, declares the Centers for Disease Control. The CDC states that the louse nymphs (a Nabokovian, and not very proper, image) mature in about another week. The Harvard School of Public Health avers maturation in nine to twelve days. A louse that's been separated from its host dies in a day or so, says Harvard; within forty-eight hours, asserts the CDC; in fifty-five hours,

opines the *NEJM*. That journal postulates head-lice-infestation rates of one to three percent in industrialized countries. This would give the United States 2.8 to 8.4 million cases a year. The CDC estimates only 6 to 12 million cases worldwide. The AAP thinks there are that many cases among three-to-twelve-year-olds in the United States alone.

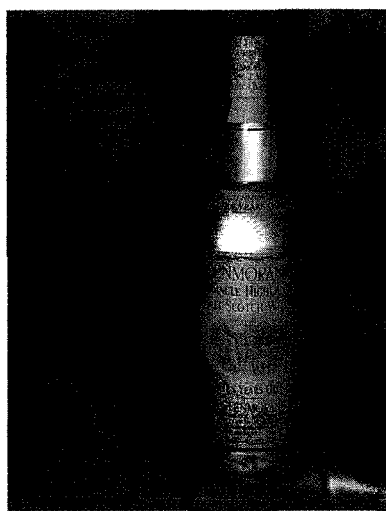
Medical researchers don't know much about head lice because they don't much care. The reason that they don't much care is, paradoxically, that they know a lot. That is, they know one important thing: there is no evidence that head lice transmit disease. Body lice can carry deadly typhus, and pubic lice breed fatal excuses. All that head lice cause is a vibrant pizzicato on the skull and an occasional secondary infection from fingernail raking. *The Merck Manual*, however, does say, "Moderate discrete posterior cervical adenopathy is frequent." I was halfway through calling an ambulance for the girls when my wife slammed my hand with the *Merriam-Webster*. That means "swollen glands."

Head-lice infestation is a Protestant work ethic of a malady. It causes effort, attention, and planning instead of excusing you from these. There are arguments that head lice cannot be communicated by anything other than live lice going for a power walk during head-to-head contact. But the arguments aren't strong enough to keep my wife from soaking barrettes, pigtail ribbons, doll brushes, and Barbie coils in alcohol; laundering everything, including the mittens on my three wood and driver; vacuuming the ceiling; and buying the local dry cleaner a summer house in the Hamptons. What couldn't be shoved into the Maytag had to be sealed in plastic garbage bags for two weeks. Fortunately, pets do not harbor head lice—a good thing, because the puppy was getting restless inside the Hefty Sak.

Is the head louse new to America's prosperous burghers? Is it part of the contemporary "cheese burgher" phenomenon—the lumpenproletariat migrating into our well-ordered lives, bringing with them their social problems? Maybe not: propriety incarnate George Washington apparently was infested; in the "Rules of Civility" he wrote out for himself at age fifteen, he avowed, "Kill no Vermin as Fleas, lice ticks &c in the Sight of Others." Or maybe so: the American Academy of Pediatrics claims that lice in an individual infestation may number a hundred or more among members of what the academy calls "cultures with different grooming practices"—which I nominate for euphemism of the year.

The *NEJM* says that head-lice occurrence "is probably increasing in the United States." The Harvard School of Public Health hedges: "The perception that lice are more prevalent today than in past decades may, perhaps, reflect societal changes in candor in discussing such issues." The more candid lower orders seem to have been discussing such issues for a while. A look into *The American Thesaurus of Slang*, compiled sixty years ago by Lester V. Berrey and Melvin Van Den Bark, reveals a trove of louse terminology: "seam squirrels," "shimmy lizards," "pants rabbits," "circus bees," "having the hootchy-cootch," "on the cootie trail," "louse-cage" (hat), "lousewalk" (hair part), "louse ladder" (run in a stocking), and "Lousy-Anna" (the state).

Anecdotal evidence for the recent spread of lice to the better-off is overwhelming, according to my speed-dial: I called some parents. People whose children are over the age of twenty-five were baffled by my inquiry. When I told them that my kids have head lice, they made a kind of phone noise indicating that my entire family tree derives from those "cultures with different grooming practices." But everyone with a child under twenty-five seemed to have had a Go-onto-



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Pharaoh, Exodus 8:17 experience: "All the dust of the land became lice ..."

Theories about the suburban sprawl of head lice abound, many involving things that are or have become bourgeois proprieties. Feminism, for instance: with mothers working, children spend more time tête-à-tête in extended school hours, day care, and play groups. ("Plague groups," one male informant said.) Or cleanliness: the *NEJM* says head lice "like clean hair." Or comfort: schools of yore were fur-

ten days, and repeat. The various brands contain either pyrethrins, which are natural extracts of the chrysanthemum plant, or permethrin, an almost identical chemical synthetic. Stuff from mums can't be too bad, or prom night and Mother's Day would be even more toxic than they are. These shampoos can be used with safety on adults or children. The only problem is they don't work.

The prescription medications approved by the FDA for head-lice

and nits. The Harvard School of Public Health tries to make the best of this: "A few lice on the head ... present an opportunity for parents to spend the needed time with their children." And Harvard goes on to recommend that treatment be "combined with perseverance and a bit of levity." I welcome any Crimson grads who care to come to my house and amuse my wife and daughters with Harvard-type jests. "A fellow with wingless insects on his head walks into the Fly Club ..."

I cannot—bless my golf-buddy optician—see well enough to do the necessary grooming. The lice are elusive. The nits are the size of telecom-stock dividends. My wife is furious. She walks around the house muttering, "Men rarely!" Domestic relations are deteriorating, owing in part to a head-lice folk remedy that calls for smothering the creatures day and night with olive oil. The whole house smells of salad. And since—with hours spent on the cootie trail—little cooking has been done for the past month, all three women might be in danger of really getting their heads bitten, if I could find the balsamic vinegar.

More and worse folk remedies are available on the Internet—pennyroyal, tea-tree, rosemary, and eucalyptus oils mixed with the virgin cold-pressed, for a smell like a koala exploding in an Italian restaurant. Along with the folk remedies come the politics of head lice. Of course head lice have politics. The very birds of the air and beasts of the field have politics nowadays. It is a tenet of bourgeois propriety to be sensitive to such politics. That's why we're sending our girls over to play with kids whose parents belong to PETA.

Head lice have their own animal-rights group, or may as well. The National Pediculosis Association doesn't exactly advocate letting lice live with dignity, but it does oppose pediculicidal treatments. Headlice.org, the NPA's Web site, states, "There are no safe pesticides, 'natural' or otherwise,



nished in polished linoleum and oak, and everyone was expected to stay in his or her own slick, hard seat. Now young educatees loll about on acres of cozy carpet and plush upholstery where, perhaps, nits lurk and lice nestle. Then there's the national epidemic of hugging. But bad news for liberals who think that head lice may be a by-product of meaningful progress in classroom diversity: "African-Americans rarely get head lice," the CDC says. The cultures with different grooming practices are those with unwashed Klan bed sheets.

To get rid of head lice you simply buy a bottle of over-the-counter pediculicide shampoo, apply, wait a week or

treatment contain either lindane or malathion. Lindane is a neurotoxin. I would as soon put lindane on my daughters as put my daughters unaccompanied on a commercial flight to Baghdad. Also, to briefly summarize research from the Department of Dermatology and Cutaneous Surgery at the University of Miami School of Medicine, lindane doesn't work. And malathion is bug spray. I wear a bandanna over my mouth, and gloves and a hat, to use it on the lace bugs in the azaleas.

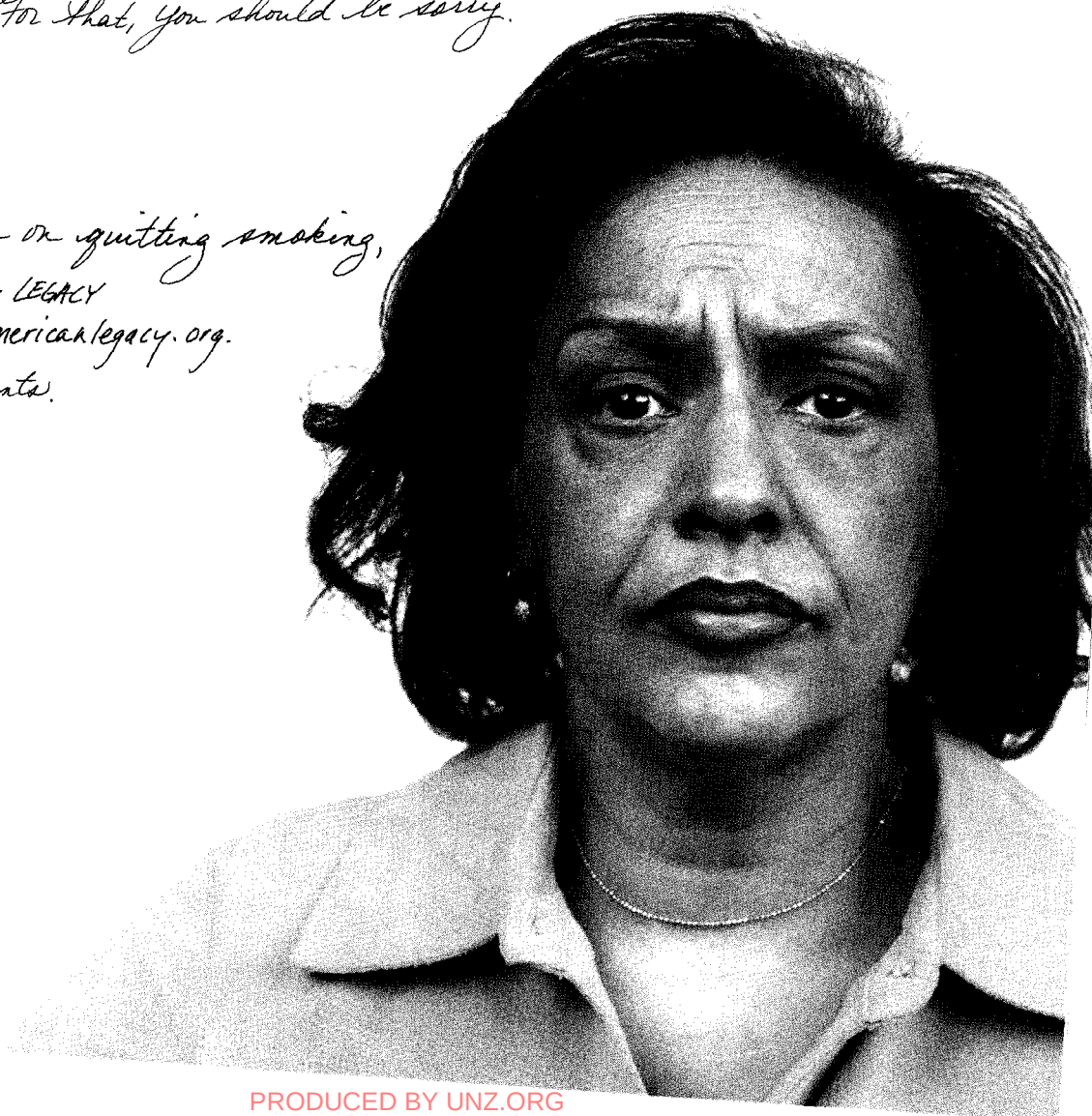
The actual answer to head lice, once the chrysanthemum sap has been rinsed from the children's hair, is mechanical removal of surviving lice

To my family,
Smoking is taking years off my life. Years
I should be spending with you. I'm sorry.
My love for you will not go with me, it will
grow inside you all.

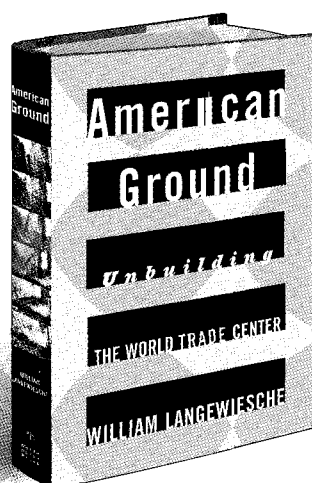
To my children,
I don't want you to be sad! Remember me,
and forgive me for leaving you so soon. When
it's over, mom will just be sleeping.

To the tobacco companies,
My name is Desmonda.
I have emphysema from smoking. You
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beautiful young woman. And the worst is
yet to come. For that, you should be sorry.

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New York Daily News



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scientifically proven to be 100% effective ... Reliance on head lice treatment products that are ineffective promotes repeated use of potentially harmful chemicals ... Nor does the association recommend Newman's Own. "Manual removal is the safe alternative ..."

The National Pediculosis Association urgently demands a no-nits policy: "the temporary dismissal of a child from a school, camp or child care setting until all head lice, lice eggs (nits) and egg cases has [sic] been removed." The *NEJM* says, "Nits may persist for months after successful treatment." Welcome to fourth grade, the best three years of your life.

In contrast, the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Harvard School of Public Health urgently demand a no no-nits policy. "Of more than six hundred samples of presumed lice and nits submitted to us for examination," Harvard says, "fewer than two-thirds contained evidence of any infestation." According to the AAP,

In a prospective study of 1729 school children screened for head lice, only 31% of the 91 children with nits had concomitant lice. Only 18% of those with nits alone converted to an active infestation over 14 days of observation.

The nits versus no-nits debate has turned into a major kerfuffle among parents, teachers, school nurses, and—for all I know—cafeteria workers forced to wear those ugly hairnets. The AAP is fretful: "No child should be allowed to miss valuable school time because of head lice." The *NEJM* is indignant: "Excluding children from school because of head lice results in anxiety, fear, social stigma, overtreatment, loss of education, and economic loss if parents miss work." And the Harvard School of Public Health puts its objections in terms so strong that one almost wonders if the Harvardians aren't former members of the National Pediculosis Association who've been deprogrammed: "These quarantine

policies seem a disagreeable vestige of certain offensive and supposedly health-based anti-ethnic strategies practiced mainly in Europe earlier this century."

A concerned father, weighing the evidence in the controversy, can only conclude, "Where were those head lice when I was stuck learning long division while the weather outside was beautiful?"

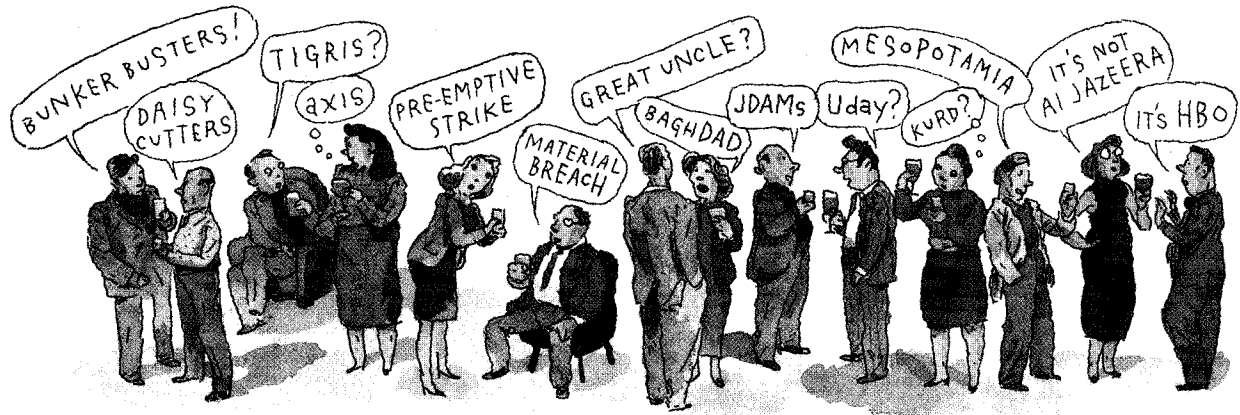
Meanwhile, I still itch. The Harvard School of Public Health explains why.

A few people remain convinced that their infestation is real, even though they have been examined by one or more competent specialists [surely, by now, my wife qualifies] who can find no physical cause for their discomfort ... Such a person may, indeed, be delusional.

And this gives me an idea, delusional though it may be. Many Muslim extremists have lots of children and some more than one wife. Western-style feminism may prove enticing to these women after they've had to drag all the tents, rugs, and camel saddles 500 miles to the nearest laundromat. And wait until they discover "men rarely." Then imagine the chaos when the no-nits dispute becomes enmeshed in sharia. Furthermore, all the AK-47s, shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missiles, car bombs, and suicide explosive belts would have to be sealed in plastic garbage bags.

We may have here a form of biological warfare that bourgeois propriety can countenance. The entire infrastructure of al Qaeda could be driven, as it were, buggy. And from what I understand of head-lice epidemiology, all we have to do is fund one day-care center. Dear Osama, may all your troubles be little ones. ▀

P.J. O'Rourke is an Atlantic correspondent and the author of several books, including The CEO of the Sofa (2001).

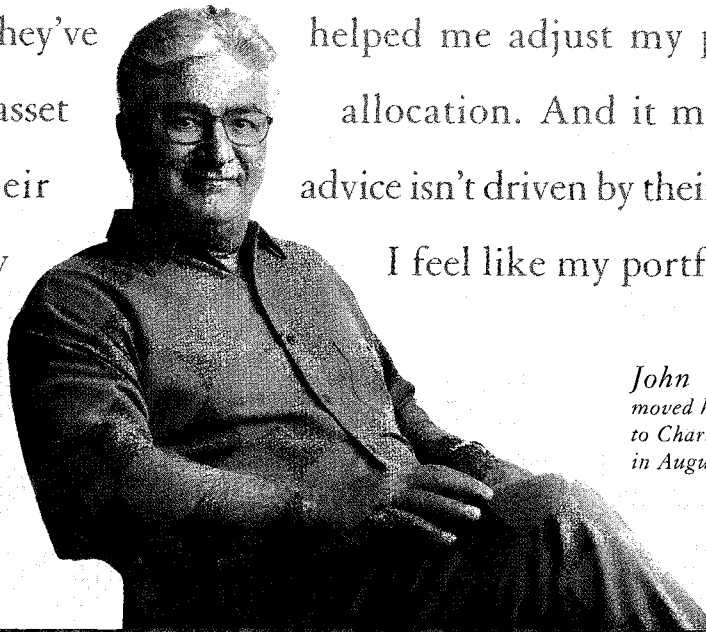


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A MISCARRIAGE OF JUSTICE

*Celebrity trials can turn into media lynchings.
Last year a Connecticut jury convicted Michael Skakel of killing
his neighbor Martha Moxley twenty-seven years ago, even though
the prosecution had no fingerprints, no DNA, and no witnesses.
The author, a former New York City prosecutor, argues that his
cousin's indictment was triggered by an inflamed media,
and that an innocent man is now in prison*

BY ROBERT F. KENNEDY JR.

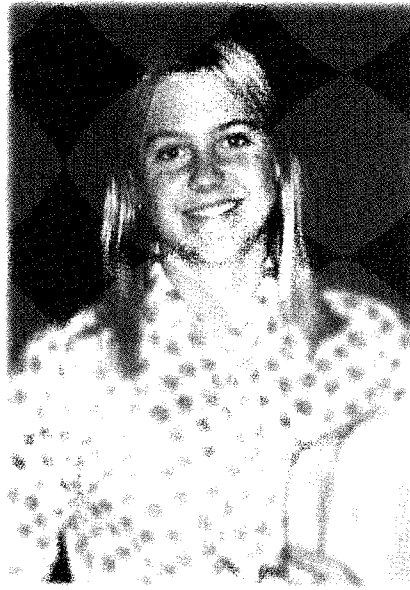
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The tragedy of Martha Moxley's death, twenty-seven years ago, has been compounded by the conviction of an innocent man.

I know Michael Skakel, my first cousin, as well as one person can know another. He helped me to get sober, in 1983. We attended hundreds of alcoholism-recovery meetings together. In that context and others we have shared our deepest feelings. For fifteen years we skied, fished, hiked, and traveled together, often with my wife and children. During that time I sometimes spent as many as two or three weekends a month in his company. Like nearly everyone else who knows him well, I love Michael. If he were guilty, I would have testified against him. He is not.

Until I recently visited him in prison, the two of us had been estranged for several years. Beginning in 1998, stress from the public focus on Michael as a murder suspect began to affect his personality. He lashed out at the Kennedy family, which he believed was partly responsible for his predicament, and refused to speak to me. On the two days I attended his court proceedings last year, in Norwalk, Connecticut, he was cold and distant. Many people asked me why I would publicly defend him—a cause unlikely to enhance my own credibility. I support him not out of misguided family loyalty but because I am certain he is innocent.

The Skakels rarely discussed the Moxley case among themselves, and mostly didn't read press reports about it—the first because of family culture and legal advice, the second because most of the press coverage was biased, inaccurate, and painful. "We never talked about it," Michael's sister, Julie,



recently told me. "Through all the years we never discussed this. We never compared notes." Michael's conviction shocked his six siblings into talking about the case with one another, and with me. For the first time, they shared their memories of the night when Martha Moxley was killed. In preparing this article I spoke to each of them; to other witnesses; to Michael's lawyers; and to investigators. I read police and press reports about the case and put together the story for myself.

MARTHA MOXLEY

Just after noon on Halloween, 1975, Martha Moxley, age fifteen, was found lying face down on her family property in the Belle Haven section of Greenwich, Connecticut. Her blue jeans and underpants were pulled down. Although strong evidence suggests that the attack was a sexual assault, the police concluded that Martha had not been raped. Her body had been dragged across the grass on a zigzag path from the Moxley driveway to the side of the lawn and hidden below the drooping boughs of a pine tree. She had been struck several times in the head with a Toney Penna golf club—so ferociously that the club had shattered into multiple pieces—and then stabbed in the neck with the broken shaft. The club's handle and part of the shaft had vanished.

Martha was last seen the night before, at the home of the Moxleys' neighbor Rushton Skakel, my mother's brother and the father of six boys and a girl. The Skakel family residence contained many golf clubs, including a set of Toney Pennas that had belonged to Rushton's wife, Anne Reynolds Skakel, who had died of cancer two years before. The Skakels played

chip and putt in their yard, and were known for leaving sports equipment scattered around the property. Rushton kept golf clubs at each door, and would carry one on his daily walk in order to ward off the numerous dogs in Belle Haven.

On the evening of Martha's murder Rushton was away on a hunting trip. The family's new live-in tutor, Kenneth Littleton, took the older children—Rush Jr., Thomas, John, Julie, and Michael—to the Belle Haven Club for dinner, along with their cousin Jim Terrien and their friend Andrea Shakespeare. Littleton later told the police that he and the children had had one Heineken each. Tom, seventeen, said they'd had several beers and some hard liquor.

The police established that the Skakel party returned home at 8:45 P.M. Martha Moxley and Helen Ix and Geoffrey Byrne, other neighbors, met Michael in the driveway, where they sat in the Skakels' Lincoln listening to music. At 9:15 Tom joined Michael and Martha in the front seat.

Around 9:30 Rush Jr. and John came from the Skakel house and told everyone that they were going to drive Jim back to the Terrien house, twenty minutes away in North Greenwich, where they would watch *Monty Python's Flying Circus*. Tom and Martha got out. Michael climbed into the back seat, as his older brothers ordered, and the four of them set off. Helen and Geoff headed home. They last saw Tom and Martha engaging in romantic horseplay near the driveway.

Eighteen years later Tom would tell investigators that after the other boys left, he'd had a "sexual" encounter with Martha that lasted twenty minutes, ending in mutual masturbation to orgasm. Around 9:50 the two rearranged their clothes, and Martha said good night. Tom last saw her hurrying across the rear lawn toward her house to make her curfew.

Using evidence from the autopsy, the police determined that the murder took place at around 10:00 P.M. Several people, including Dorothy Moxley, Martha's mother, Helen Ix, and David Skakel, then aged twelve, heard dogs howling furiously from 9:50 to 10:30 with, Helen said, a "scared violent barking." Michael and his older brothers did not return to Belle Haven until 11:20.

THE FIRST SUSPECTS

The writer Dominick Dunne, a driving force behind Michael Skakel's prosecution, continually accused the Skakel family of using its power and Kennedy connections to intimidate the Greenwich police "to protect one of their own." In 1991 Dunne wrote in *Vanity Fair*, "It is thought in the community and elsewhere that Kennedy influence was brought to bear." In 1996 he told a UPI re-

porter, "The [Skakel] family is so powerful that since the first night the police have never been able to question family members." In 2000 Dunne said on CNN, "The Skakels were able to hold off the police all these years ... If this was a family of lesser stature, that simply would not have happened."

Reporters who conducted serious investigations into Dunne's charges found them to be false. Leonard Levitt, a reporter for *Newsday* who wrote the most thorough journalistic treatment of the Moxley case, concluded that although inept work by a police department that had not investigated a homicide for decades may have let the killer go free, this had nothing to do with intimidation by the Skakels. In an exhaustive 1997 article in *The Hartford Courant*, Joel Lang concluded that Dunne's accusations "probably sprang more from bias than fact." "There was no cover up," Levitt told Lang. "There was a screw-up." John Elvin, who in 1999 wrote a comprehensive investigative piece on the murder for the magazine *Insight on the News*, described the Skakels as "cooperative—somewhat bizarrely ... even participating in the search for evidence and serving coffee and snacks to the cops." The Greenwich police detective Stephen Carroll, who was one of the first officers to arrive on the scene, told

the *New York Daily News* that Rushton Skakel "was so cooperative and there was the feeling that no one there could have done it."

Everyone in the Skakel house spoke to police investigators freely and without counsel. All the Skakels, including Michael, indicated

their willingness to take polygraph tests, and at least two family members did take them. In the months after the murder Tom Skakel submitted to multiple interviews and two lie-detector tests; Rushton gave detectives permission to take hair samples from Tom and to obtain his school, medical, and psychological records. With the family's consent the police drained the Skakels' pool and took soil samples from their yard. Rushton allowed the police to use his house as an informal neighborhood headquarters while they investigated the crime. Garbage from the house was searched regularly.

Dunne and, later, his friend and protégé, the former Los Angeles detective Mark Fuhrman (who had become notorious for lying under oath during the O.J. Simpson trial), would complain that the Greenwich police never obtained a search warrant for the Skakel residence, saying they didn't dare. "Someone bowed to influence," Dunne concluded in the 1991 *Vanity Fair* article. But Rushton gave the police a signed consent-to-search form and full access to the house, and allowed them to examine it whenever they wanted. Stephen Carroll and his colleague James Lunney conducted several thorough searches. "It was an open house—he'd never even

Michael's conviction shocked his six siblings into talking about the case with one another, and with me. For the first time, they shared their memories of that night.

go with us," Carroll told Fuhrman. Rushton also gave the police keys to his Catskills ski house, in Windham, New York. Carroll explained to *The Hartford Courant*, "People criticize us for not getting search warrants. But [the Skakels'] attitude was, 'Oh, yes, help yourself.'" He explained to Fuhrman, "We never thought there was any reason to get a search warrant, because we had already been through the house. Up one side, down the other."

Contrary to Dunne's assertions, the Skakels never got a break from the police, who immediately began focusing on Tom Skakel and a twenty-six-year-old Moxley neighbor as the primary suspects. Because Tom was the last person known to have seen Martha alive, he was interrogated for nearly six hours at police headquarters as soon as Martha's body was discovered.

This unusual level of cooperation lasted for three months. In late January, as the police intensified their focus on Tom, Rushton Skakel finally hired a criminal lawyer, Emanuel Margolis, to represent Tom. Margolis took the common precaution of shutting down access to his client. Pledging continued cooperation, he asked investigators to submit to him any further questions for family members. Margolis and Thomas Sheridan, Rushton's longtime friend and corporate attorney, met and spoke with the police and the state attorney's office periodically, conveying questions to and answers from family and household members. In the early 1990s the Skakels opened their Belle Haven and Windham houses and allowed police officers to thoroughly search their houses and property with a newly developed metal detector, to gather stain samples from household carpets, and to videotape every room. Tom was willing to testify at Michael's trial; prosecutors called him to Connecticut from Massachusetts, where he now lives, but they canceled his appearance the night before he was scheduled to testify. Michael, too, never hesitated to help police investigators. Last year, when it was reported that the state attorney's office had DNA from scrapings taken from under Martha's fingernails at her autopsy, Michael was perfectly willing to comply with the request for his own DNA for testing. The old evidence could not be linked to anyone other than Martha, however, so the prosecution withdrew its request for Michael's samples.

Sheridan's perception of the Greenwich police contradicts Dunne's. According to Sheridan, "There was a faction

within the Greenwich police who were not interested in any evidence that did not point to 'Tom Skakel.' Sheridan believes that police investigators violated Tom's constitutional rights by interrogating him when he was a minor for almost nine hours without counsel, more than five of those with no adult present. The police refused to hand over those interviews to Margolis. The police repeatedly lost or mishandled evidence that might have exculpated Tom, including a piece of the golf-club shaft that was found with the body, a white hair pulled by the roots and found on Martha's body, and vaginal swabs taken by the Connecticut medical examiner. In May of 1976 the Greenwich police submitted to the state attorney's office an application for a bench warrant charging Tom with the murder. "The application was based on all kinds of shaky evidence," Harold Pickerstein, the attorney for Jack Solomon, then the chief inspector in the Fairfield County state attorney's office, recently

told me. (Solomon, who is now the chief of police in Easton, Connecticut, will not discuss the case.) Solomon and the state's attorney Donald Browne concluded that the application did not meet legal standards for probable cause and refused to sign it. "I read it," Browne recently told me, "and there was nothing in there other than the fact that he was the last to see her alive and that he'd had some mental problems in the past." (Tom had suffered a serious childhood brain injury and related seizures.) Browne also said that he remembers pressure from the police to

charge Tom: "There was some suggestion that if you issue a warrant, nobody will accuse you of not doing your job. But I don't do things that way."

In January of 1976 Rushton had been hospitalized with chest pain soon after he realized that the police considered Tom a serious suspect. Rather than close ranks to protect a killer, though, as Dunne and Fuhrman claim the family did, Rushton initiated his own investigation to determine whether his children could have had any involvement in the murder. All the children underwent batteries of psychological tests and were hypnotized and injected with sodium pentothal—so-called truth serum, which disinhibits subjects. (Today's justice system regards sodium pentothal and sodium amytal, which also has a disinhibiting effect, with a combination of credence and suspicion similar to that with which it views polygraphs.) Michael, who was not a suspect at the time, took a sodium-pentothal test in 1980



The Skakel family, Nantucket, 1979. Michael is third from left

and two more in the early 1990s; after each one, Margolis says, psychiatrists concluded that he had not committed the crime. Tom was examined by prominent doctors and subjected to neurological and psychological testing at Presbyterian Hospital in New York City. In March of 1976 the doctors concluded, according to Margolis, that Tom could not have committed the crime. The Skakel family lawyers conveyed the results of these tests to the police.

In the early investigations Michael Skakel was never a serious suspect. Three witnesses said that he was miles away, watching *Monty Python*, when the murder occurred, and John Skakel's testimony was polygraph-certified. To anyone who knew him at the time, the notion that he was the murderer is laughable. (Our families were not then close, and I saw him little.) A scrawny kid who had just turned fifteen, Michael was always the smallest person in his class and at summer camp. He almost certainly lacked both the power to inflict the gruesome damage done to Martha Moxley and the presence of mind to meticulously dispose of the abundant forensic evidence. Don Mallard, a physician who knew Michael and who examined Martha's body, told Mrs. Victor Ziminsky, a Skakel family friend who later told me, that it was "impossible" that Michael could have wielded a golf club with the savagery or strength needed to shatter the shaft and drive it through Martha's body. Mallard, who has since died, said it was equally unlikely that Michael could then drag Martha, who matched him in

weight, to the tree, more than a hundred yards from where she was first attacked. The photos used against Michael in court, in which he looks bulky, were taken four years after the murder. Family members told me that at the time of the murder Michael weighed 120 pounds and had a twenty-inch waist.

The case has remained unsolved for so many years not because of Skakel wealth, power, and connections but because it is baffling. There have been more than 600 unsolved murders in Connecticut since Martha's death, several of them in Greenwich. This one was especially difficult because of a parade of more than forty potential suspects. Besides Tom Skakel and the other neighbor these included Franz Wittine, a German gardener who lived in the Skakels' basement and liked to boast of how he had raped and beaten girls as a soldier during World War II. Wittine, who gave four different alibis, liked young blondes and was physically powerful. He was notorious for his lascivious advances toward Julie Skakel and her girlfriends, some of whom were too

frightened of him to visit the Skakel house. Back steps leading to his room in the basement allowed him to come and go without notice. Shortly after the murder Wittine disappeared for a short time, quitting his job just a few months shy of the twenty years that would have qualified him for a pension from a Skakel-owned company—a choice that dramatically affected his financial position. He died in 2000.

Also on the list was Ken Littleton, the Skakel family tutor, who in the fall of 1976 emerged as the police's strongest suspect.

KEN LITTLETON

In 1975 Kenneth Wayne Littleton Jr. was a burly twenty-three-year-old graduate of Williams College, where he'd played rugby; he taught science and coached football at the Brunswick School, in Greenwich. Rushton Skakel had hired Littleton as a live-in tutor and companion to care for his motherless children. Littleton had begun work for the Skakels and visited their home the previous week, and moved in on the day of the murder.

Under police questioning the following day Littleton claimed that after arriving home from dinner he had gone to the master bedroom, on the second floor, where he remained until morning. He said he had neither heard nor seen anything suspicious. Two weeks later, on November 14, Littleton admitted that he had not stayed upstairs but had gone downstairs to watch

TV and had seen Tom and Michael Skakel outside with Martha Moxley. He would later deny ever having seen Martha. On December 10 Littleton again changed his story, now saying that from 9:15 to 9:30 he had left the house and walked around the property to look for the Skakel boys. Littleton told the police that he saw no one during his search.

On April 2, 1976, Mildred Ix, Helen's mother and a confidante of Rushton's, told the police that "girlie magazines were found in Mr. Littleton's room," and that he was in the habit of visiting the Skakel gazebo in the nude. She urged them to look again at Littleton. When detectives questioned him later that month, he changed his story for the third time, saying that on the evening of October 30 he had come down to the first floor after watching TV upstairs. When he entered the kitchen, the Skakels' elderly nanny, Margaret Sweeney, asked him to check the driveway, where she'd heard "a fracas caused by the kids." Littleton now said that he went to the area and saw no one, but heard rustling



The Skakel house

noises coming from the bushes. Police records kept by Jack Solomon show that Littleton now recalled leaving the Skakel house at 10:30 P.M.—an hour later than he'd earlier claimed. Police examiners gave Littleton three lie-detector tests on October 18, 1976. Each test indicated that Littleton was lying when he denied killing Martha Moxley or knowing the location of the missing golf-club pieces. The police confronted Littleton with his test results and asked him to submit to a sodium-pentothal examination. When Littleton refused, the police began looking more closely. They found that his behavior had changed "markedly" since Martha's death.

In April of 1976 Rushton Skakel had fired Littleton after the police visited the Skakel home and reported that Littleton had wrapped his car around a tree in a drunken accident and then abandoned it. Littleton moved to Nantucket, where he traded his preppy clothes for a white outfit with a shark's-tooth necklace framed by an unbuttoned shirt. Walking around town, he would look at himself in store windows, fixing his hair and flexing his muscles. People who had known him previously told the police that he was "bizarre and obnoxious" and had changed for the worse. That summer the Nantucket police arrested Littleton on charges of burglarizing several gift shops. In July,

Littleton knocked down a woman employee of the Nantucket Police Department after she casually bumped his dancing partner. That month a Nantucket tourist awoke to find Littleton lying naked on top of her. He had broken in through

her bedroom window. Littleton was then living with a woman who told the police that he sometimes "forced himself on her sexually" and often erupted in fits of violence, smashing things in her apartment.

When the Greenwich police learned of Littleton's arrest, they persuaded Nantucket prosecutors to offer to reduce Littleton's felony charge to a misdemeanor if he would submit to a sodium-amytal interview about the Moxley murder. Littleton refused, and pleaded guilty to the felony—a plea that ended his teaching and coaching career. In May of 1977 the Nantucket court gave him a suspended sentence and placed him on probation. In explaining his crime spree to the judge, Littleton said, "When I drink I flip out."

Jack Solomon, of the Fairfield County state attorney's office, and the Greenwich detective Stephen Carroll were convinced that Littleton had murdered Martha Moxley. But they lacked the hard evidence needed for an effective prosecution. The many other plausible suspects would give potential defense attorneys ample opportunity to introduce reasonable doubt, which would prevent a jury from convicting Littleton. The common thinking was that only a confession would result in a conviction. Solomon and

Browne resisted the temptation to arrest a suspect in the murder just to appease public demand that they solve it. And so the Moxley murder investigation petered out and became a "cold file."

In 1982 Littleton moved to Florida, where he lived as a street person and was arrested for a variety of crimes, including trespassing, disorderly conduct, drunk driving, public intoxication, and shoplifting. In one incident he climbed a sixteen-story structure and gave President John F. Kennedy's "*Ich bin ein Berliner*" speech. When he was arrested, he told the police that he was "Kenny Kennedy," the black sheep of the Kennedy family.

That year Littleton met Mary Baker, who was also an alcoholic and was in recovery. They moved to Canada and married in Ottawa on April 27, 1983. In a 1991 interview with the Connecticut police conducted in Ottawa—an interview that has never been published—Baker described Littleton as "going nuts" in February of 1984 after he started talking about the Moxley murder. He called Martha's father, David Moxley, Baker said, and asked for money to undergo sodium-pentothal testing, offering to give Moxley copies of the tapes. Littleton said he thought the testing would give

him peace of mind and perhaps help him to remember things that happened the night of the murder. He told Moxley that Martha's murder was their "mutual tragedy." Despite his offer to David Moxley, Littleton never did submit to a sodium-pentothal test, although, according to

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his wife, he remained obsessed by the idea.

In Canada, Littleton was unable to work owing to instability and alcoholism. He and Baker played golf and lived off money she had inherited. Baker told the police that Littleton liked pornography and would often visit strip bars. In June of 1983 his arm was mangled during a knife fight in Hull, Quebec. That autumn the Canadian police arrested him for disruptive conduct near the Canadian Parliament building. After his release the couple moved to Belmont, near Boston.

By 1984, Baker said in her later statements to the police, Littleton had begun identifying himself again as "Kenneth Kennedy," and believed that he could cause a tornado or a hurricane by flushing the toilet. He ate money, drank toilet water, left golf clubs at synagogues, and collected JFK matchbooks. He was often sick from drinking and occasionally suffered delirium tremens. Baker said that while on a trip through Connecticut in February of 1984, Littleton told her that he saw pink elephants and believed that he had magical powers. The police took him to a hospital, and he was in and out of psychiatric facilities over the subsequent years. In November of 1984 Littleton

locked Baker and their new baby out of the house; the Belmont police arrested him and reportedly found a knife collection. Baker explained that Littleton had carried a knife in his sock ever since his stabbing in Canada—which he later described to the grand jury as an attempted hit by the Skakel family.

In April of 1985, following another alcohol-induced mental breakdown, Littleton was admitted to Charles River Hospital. In 1986 he became active in an alcoholism-recovery group, but he slipped repeatedly and was plagued by hallucinations and manic depression. In October of 1988 he began staying in Williamstown, Massachusetts, where he stalked the Williams rugby team, attended school sporting events, and played golf. According to police reports, Littleton told security officers at Williams that he was a reformed alcoholic and that drinking and drugs had destroyed his life. At one point he cornered the college's dean, William R. Darrow, in his office to request a job advising the rugby team on substance abuse, causing Darrow to "fear for his personal safety" and scaring him "to death." Darrow later described Littleton to the police as "big ... and extremely angry." Police reports quoted him as saying that Littleton had started talking about the Moxley murder and "became very intense." Darrow told the police that Littleton was "nuts" and that his encounter with Littleton was "one of the most frightening experiences of his life."

According to Baker, Littleton sometimes threatened to kill her. He would become particularly depressed, she told the police, around Halloween, the anniversary of Martha's murder. In October of 1989 she threw him out and separated from him. In May of 1990 he threw hot coffee on her and tried to force his way into her house. Littleton moved in with a manic-depressive stripper named Kimberly, in Boston's Combat Zone. He planned to become a male stripper and join Kimberly in her act. He and Baker were divorced on July 12, 1990.

By August of 1991, when Connecticut law-enforcement authorities reopened the Moxley case, Littleton, still a prime suspect, had again been institutionalized, for manic depression and paranoid delusions, at McLean Hospital, in Belmont. Jack Solomon; Sergeant Frank Garr, of the Greenwich police; and Detroit homicide detectives, whom the Greenwich police had brought in to help them with their investigation, all believed that Littleton might be responsible for a string of unsolved homicides of young women in Massachusetts, Florida, Maine, New York, and Canada. On September 23, 1991, Garr went to Ottawa to examine the police files on three young women who had disappeared during a twenty-three-day period in 1988. None of the bodies were ever found.

In Garr's report he concluded, "All three women were last seen in the same vicinity ... within close proximity to where Ken Littleton had resided."

That month the Greenwich police interviewed Mary Baker and informed her that they suspected Littleton was a serial killer. She told the police, as described in a previously unpublished 1993 search-warrant application for Littleton's hair and blood samples, that "Littleton had frequently and compulsively" made incriminating statements about the Moxley murder. She said that from the time she met Littleton, in 1982, he had been obsessed and paranoid over the Moxley case and described the incident as "a monkey on his back." She told the police that Littleton had said that "maybe some wickedness took him over for five minutes." She said that Littleton was plagued with "a nagging doubt, because he's not a well man, and [because of] the fact it was not resolved."

On December 4, 1991, according to the search-warrant request, Mary Baker called Garr to say that she'd just had a telephone conversation with Littleton during which he worried that the Connecticut state police might find the missing golf-club handle and trace his fingerprints. "Even if I'm innocent, I could be charged with murder," she said

he told her. "Let's say a hunter or someone tripped over them in the woods." She said that he mentioned a pair of pants that he said might have Martha's blood on them. The police knew that Littleton, at his own suggestion, had taken some of the Skakel boys to the

A composite portrait based on the report of a security guard, withheld by prosecutors during the Skakel trial and released afterward, is a dead ringer for Littleton.

family's Catskills cabin the weekend after the killing, and they speculated that he could have disposed of the evidence then. The police report noted that while in Windham, Littleton had borrowed a shotgun from Rushton's friend and attorney Thomas Sheridan, saying he wanted to go hunting in the woods.

With Baker's permission, the police began taping conversations between the estranged couple. In a conversation taped by the police on February 10, 1992, Littleton acknowledged to Baker that he had been in an alcoholic blackout on the night of the murder—a significant admission, because he had previously told the police he'd drunk just a single beer. On the same tape Baker reminded Littleton of a conversation during the previous Thanksgiving when Littleton had "renounced the Martha Moxley secret" to her and admitted he was present when Martha died. She reminded him that he had talked to her about a hunting trip and had said, "I hope they don't find it, I hope they don't find, you know, my pants, I didn't do it, it was an accident." She also reminded him that in September he had described details of the killing. "Oh God," she told Littleton he had said. "She wouldn't die. I had to stab her

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through the neck." She said to Littleton, "I mean, you convinced me that you did it." Littleton's responses on the tape are noncommittal.

LITTLETON: You think I did it?

BAKER: I, I can't say right this minute. But you convinced me, this is what I've been living with ...

LITTLETON: Um, um.

When this and several similar tapes, including Littleton's many confused denials of Baker's recollections, were played at the trial, Michael Skakel's prosecutors argued that the police who were recording Littleton's conversations were causing Baker to plant these ideas in his head. Mary Baker herself testified that Littleton "never made any admission as to his complicity in the crime" and that she believed "he didn't commit the murder." But Jack Solomon strongly defended his belief in her earlier statements to the police. At the trial he testified, "Our hope was ... to corroborate what [Baker] told us about him, all the statements that he made ... for several months." Solomon said that based on her information his department had devoted enormous resources to searching the wilderness around Windham with officers and dogs for the golf-club handle and pants. "If I put her up to that," he said, "I certainly would not have gone up there and tried to corroborate. The tape speaks for itself."

On December 15, 1992, Littleton took a polygraph exam administered by the nationally recognized polygraph expert Robert Brisentine. The test again indicated that Littleton "was not truthful when he denied causing the death of Miss Moxley." After confirming these results in a second test, Brisentine left the examining room. According to someone close to the conversation, he took Solomon aside and said, "The man who murdered Martha Moxley is sitting in that room. Don't ever let anyone persuade you otherwise." A similar version of the same event is reported in Timothy Dumas's *Greentown* (1998). Brisentine himself recently told me that he doesn't recall having said that, but added that he did ask to interrogate Littleton further at the time, because "even if he didn't commit the crime, he definitely had guilty knowledge of the crime and probably knows who did." By now Littleton had failed five polygraphs about the Moxley murder.

That same month, during a tape-recorded conversation with a state-retained psychiatrist, Kathleen Morall, Littleton

wondered whether he "could have" committed the crime. Earlier that year the forensic scientist Henry Lee had identified two hairs found on or near Martha's body as "microscopically similar" to Littleton's. One of these was later determined to be from someone of Asian descent; the other was destroyed during testing.

In an interview in October of 1992, Littleton told the police that he'd heard dogs barking when he wandered the Skakel yard around 9:30 P.M. This directly contradicted what he had earlier told the police. In his earlier interviews and during his polygraph tests on October 18, 1976, Littleton had claimed that Margaret Sweeney sent him outside to check on the "fracas" in the driveway area. During those polygraphs, the 1993 search-warrant request explained, "Littleton was specifically asked if he'd heard a dog, to which he answered 'no.' Littleton then volunteered that he did not hear any

barking" when he went outside, and that he had heard no barking dogs "throughout the night." Mary Baker later told the police that Littleton had a peculiar hatred of dogs, "specifically when they bark." She did not say when that hatred began.

This is consistent with Solomon's speculation that after Sweeney asked Littleton to check on the fracas, Littleton's hatred of dogs prompted him to grab a golf club stored near the door. Outside he heard the rustling of Tom and Martha in the bushes. Inflamed and in an alcoholic stupor, he followed

Martha as she walked toward her house. When she refused his advances, he struck her and dragged her under the evergreen boughs. In Solomon's judgment, the zigzagging path across the yard, first toward a neighbor's house and then back to the pine tree, indicates a perpetrator unfamiliar with the terrain. The tree under which Martha's body was found was adjacent to a path used daily by local children as a shortcut from southern Belle Haven to Walsh Lane, where many of their friends lived. According to Sheridan, the Skakel family lawyer, "Anyone familiar with the neighborhood would have dragged her another ten yards into the tall grass, where she might have remained hidden for days."

Julie Skakel told me that she talked with Littleton as he entered the kitchen from the pantry, at around 10:00 P.M. The location is inconsistent with any of his alibis: when he first told of leaving the house, he said he had re-entered through the front door. The door to a mud room off the



Part of the murder weapon

pantry was the only place one might expect to enter the Skakel home unobserved. Littleton had changed from the plaid shirt he had worn at dinner, Julie said, into a sweat-shirt. A part-time security guard, Charles Morganti, had described seeing a 200-pound, six-foot man near the Moxley yard at the time of the murder. A composite portrait based on Morganti's report, withheld by prosecutors during the Skakel trial and released afterward, is a dead ringer for Littleton. The day after the murder the Skakel maid found laundered dungarees and Tretorn sneakers in the laundry room. The pants, for a thirty-six-inch waist, and shoes were too large to fit any member of the Skakel family. The police thought that the clothing had been washed too vigorously for any blood traces to show up, according to Thomas Sheridan. Then the police lost these critical pieces of evidence. Finally, Tom Skakel told me that he and Littleton had watched *The French Connection* after 10:00 on the night of the murder, and that Littleton had kept his body entirely covered with a blanket—something Tom had considered odd, because it was not cold in the room. Julie has no memory of seeing bloody pants. In Littleton's defense, there are inconsistencies and memory gaps among the stories of the dozens of witnesses I interviewed recently. I have no reason to believe that any of them deliberately lied to me.

In February of 1993 Littleton told the police that he was no longer willing to cooperate in the investigation. In 1994 Solomon told

Sheridan that Boston authorities had impounded Littleton's car after a run-in with a Boston policeman. Sheridan recently told me that Solomon then showed him and Emanuel Margolis, Tom Skakel's lawyer, a black three-ring binder containing photos of the bodies of teenage girls fatally bludgeoned within the vicinity of Littleton's various homes. Littleton was a suspect in the murders, Solomon told him. Solomon said he was trying to assemble an arrest warrant for Littleton in the Moxley murder. For unknown reasons the warrant was never obtained. In the summer of 1998 Connecticut's attorney general granted Littleton lifetime immunity and removed him from the suspect list in exchange for his testimony before a rarely invoked one-man grand jury called to indict Michael Skakel.

In July of 1999 Littleton called the *Greenwich Time* from McLean Hospital and said that the Kennedy family was trying to kill him. Shortly after being released he stabbed himself four times in the chest with a kitchen knife. The police who searched his apartment found the charred pages of a diary, torn from the binding and burned. Littleton refused to talk with the police about the stabbing.

DOMINICK DUNNE

I do not know that Ken Littleton killed Martha Moxley. I do know—and as a former prosecutor, I understand the laws of evidence—that the state's case against Littleton was much stronger than any case against Michael Skakel. Many people have wondered why, after years of uncertainty and inaction, Connecticut officials decided to pursue Michael with sudden ferocity. The answer is Dominick Dunne.

Dunne, who has transformed a lifelong fascination with celebrity and wealth into a career as a gossip and a novelist, had personal reasons for his attraction to this case. His own daughter, Dominique, was murdered in 1982, and her killer, a restaurant chef, was released from prison after serving less than three years. "I was so outraged about our justice system," Dunne told a reporter in a 1996 interview, "that everything I've written since has dealt with that system—how people with money and power get different verdicts than other people."

Dunne has built his career on linking notorious murders to powerful people, including John and Patsy Ramsey, Claus von Bulow, and O.J. Simpson. That formula has given

Dunne his own measure of celebrity and wealth. His efforts to connect a Kennedy relative to the Moxley murder have been both a decade-long fixation and a profitable venture. "The Kennedys," he has said, "are the greatest soap opera in American history."

Dunne has built his career on linking notorious murders to powerful people. Michael was caught in the cross hairs where Dunne's ambitions intersected with his obsessions.

Michael Skakel would get caught in the cross hairs where Dunne's ambitions intersected with his obsessions.

In the fall of 1991 Dunne, then covering William Kennedy Smith's rape trial in Palm Beach for *Vanity Fair*, repeated a report that the Connecticut state's attorney Donald Browne had requested forensic evidence from Will Smith. Dunne wrote, "Though there have been reports that Willy Smith was a guest of the Skakels [the night of Martha Moxley's murder] no evidence links him to the case." He also wrote that Browne denied the story. What Dunne did not say, and did not know, is that Will Smith had never met a Skakel with the exception of Ethel Kennedy. Not until two years later did Dunne admit that the rumor had been proved false.

Dunne knew almost nothing about the Moxley murder in 1991. Yet in his article about the Smith trial he declared, "Either the [Moxley] investigation was thoroughly botched or someone bowed to influence." Dunne would subsequently enlarge on this theme in a best-selling novel, a TV miniseries, and articles for *Vanity Fair*. In the novel, *A Season in Purgatory* (1993), a thinly veiled John F. Kennedy Jr. murders his young neighbor in Greenwich and gets away with it

because of family power. At the time, Dunne was convinced that Tom Skakel had killed Martha, and never lost an opportunity to point out that Tom was still the chief suspect during an extensive national television tour for his novel, which included appearances on programs such as *Hard Copy* and the *CBS Evening News With Connie Chung*, and also interviews with Jay Leno and Joan Rivers.

As Dunne likes to say, his book and the miniseries that followed dramatically raised the public profile of the unsolved murder. Liz Smith reported in a 1993 column that the Greenwich Police Department felt that Dunne had put it on the spot. According to Frank Garr and Donald Browne, it was the publicity generated by the Smith trial, which included a Leonard Levitt article that accused the Greenwich police of having made errors, that led the state to reopen the investigation.

If it didn't turn out that a Kennedy cousin had committed the crime, the story would be worth much less to Dunne. Dunne ignored the strong evidence against Littleton; in his many articles and interviews about the case he never mentioned Littleton's five failed polygraphs, his shifting alibis, his call to David Moxley, his statement to the psychiatrist about whether he could have committed the crime, the physical evidence of hair similarities, his history of sexual misconduct, and his capacity to deliver the blows. Dunne suggested that Littleton's alcoholism and his criminal activity were the result of stress from unfair suspicion. The Skakels never publicly blamed Littleton for the crime. In his *Vanity Fair* article on the murder Dunne offered a purged and abbreviated inventory of Littleton's criminal and mental-health history and then concluded, "But there is one thing I'm sure he didn't do: he did not kill Martha Moxley." No Skakel has ever benefited from the same presumption of innocence in Dunne's writings.

Soon after Will Smith's acquittal, in December of 1991, Dunne wrote to Dorothy Moxley, recounting his own daughter's murder and asking to meet her. Their terrible shared tragedies appealed to her trust, and they forged a friendship. Dunne wrote in *Vanity Fair*, "I swore to her that I would help her get justice for her daughter." Dorothy Moxley, who had previously been as judicious as everyone else, became certain that a Skakel had committed the crime. She has often acknowledged that her theories about Skakel involvement were influenced by Dunne.

In promoting *A Season in Purgatory*, Dunne kept up his needling. "There are only two possible reasons" the murder remained unsolved, he told the *Chicago Tribune*. "Either the police are totally inept. Or somehow power and money have played a part in covering up." Such statements continued to rankle law-enforcement officials. After his book tour Dunne was visited by several members of the Moxley investigation team, including Frank Garr, who brought gifts of a state-police plaque, a T-shirt, and a mug, and asked him to stop criticizing their work. Dunne agreed to a truce. Garr would later lead

the efforts to press charges against Michael Skakel. Jack Solomon and Donald Browne retired from the state attorney's office. Garr moved from the Greenwich Police Department to the state attorney's office to take over Solomon's responsibilities.

Although Solomon would not speak to me about the case, a source close to him who wishes to remain unnamed told me in November, "Jack believes that your cousin did not commit the murder. He is absolutely sick and beside himself because he believes an innocent man is in the can. But Jack is a cop through and through, and he will not make any public statement that might embarrass his law-enforcement colleagues."

In May of 1996 the miniseries *A Season in Purgatory* aired, and Dunne mounted yet another media blitz. That month he escorted Dorothy Moxley to a press conference to announce that she was raising the reward for information about her daughter's killer from \$50,000 to \$100,000.

Even though Dunne had said he would stop picking on the Greenwich police, he soon urged his friend Mark Fuhrman to become their Torquemada. He provided Fuhrman with evidence that would be central to Fuhrman's book *Murder in Greenwich* (1998) and, Fuhrman said, the inspiration to write it. The book, with an introduction by Dunne, is a 283-page diatribe against the Greenwich police, who, Fuhrman says in the book, angered him by treating him as a pariah. Fuhrman castigated them as "servants of the rich and powerful." Echoing Dunne, he wrote, "Someone killed Martha Moxley and got away with it. And the reason he got away with it was that the Greenwich Police Department ... didn't have the courage to go after him."

SUTTON ASSOCIATES

Dunne would later brag that it was his relentless campaign after the publication of his novel that prompted Rushton Skakel to take a step that led to Dunne's bringing Fuhrman into the case—and that eventually doomed Michael. In the spring of 1993 Rushton, who was already suffering from the frontal-lobe dementia and schizophrenia that would later debilitate him, hired at Sheridan's urging Sutton Associates, a private-investigation firm composed of former law-enforcement officials from the FBI and the New York Police Department. The Skakels were convinced that the original police investigation had been bungled, to Tom's detriment, and they were desperate to clear the family name.

Sutton's president, James Murphy, a veteran of fifteen years with the FBI, recently told me, "While Rushton Skakel thoroughly believed his children were innocent, we were told that wherever the chips fall, they, the Skakel family ... want to know the truth and that the Skakel family recognized Mrs. Moxley's pain and have instructed that any information that develops which contributes to the solution of Martha Moxley's homicide is to be immediately

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shared with Connecticut authorities.” Both Murphy, who is now an ordained Catholic deacon, and Thomas Sheridan, who acted as the liaison between Sutton and the Skakel family, told me that they were certain Rushton would have turned any of his children over to the police if he thought they were guilty.

The Greenwich police cooperated with Sutton, as did most other witnesses. All the members of the Skakel family agreed to talk to Sutton detectives about their memories of that night. It was the first time that most of them had discussed the Moxley murder at any length, publicly or privately, since their original police interviews. Several of them, including John and Julie, underwent hypnosis and sodium-pentothal testing. Sutton interviewed hundreds of people, including Ken Littleton and John Moxley, Martha’s brother.

Both Tom and Michael told Sutton detectives details they had not disclosed to the police in 1975. Tom, for example, described his sexual encounter with Martha on the rear lawn of the Skakel property. When I recently asked Tom why he had waited so long to tell the full story, I anticipated his answer—Rushton’s severe attitude toward sex. (Rushton, his children told me, considered masturbation “equivalent to the slaughter of millions of potential Christians.”) Tom was his father’s favored son. “I loved my father and didn’t want to lose his respect,” he told me. “My father was the most important person in my life. He was a staunch Catholic with strict views about premarital sex. I was frightened of disappointing him.”

Michael had equally urgent concerns. The runt of the family, he had always been a target for his father’s anger. Rushton Skakel drank alcoholically for four years following his wife’s death. (He quit drinking in 1977.) During this period he occasionally hit Michael, and once fired a gun in his direction during a hunting trip. Michael sometimes slept in a closet to escape his father’s wrath. When Michael was ten, Rushton had caught him looking at *Playboy* with his friends and knocked him silly. By age thirteen Michael was an alcoholic.

In 1993 he had been sober for eleven years and was a powerful athlete. No longer fearful of his father, Michael, too, told Sutton detectives the full story of what he had done that night. After returning from the Terriens’, at around 11:20, high on pot and alcohol, he had gone for a walk to peep through the window of a woman who was known to walk around her house scantily clad. Disappointed that her shades were drawn, he decided to go home. When he passed the Moxley house, Michael saw a light and climbed a tree next to a bedroom he thought was Martha’s.

He tossed pebbles to get her attention and called, “Martha, Martha,” but there was no response. He made a halfhearted attempt to masturbate in the tree before becoming embarrassed and climbing down. On his way home he sensed a presence in the dark bushes near the Moxleys’ driveway. He yelled, threw stones in that direction, and dashed back to his house, frightened. The downstairs doors being bolted, he climbed through his bedroom window at 12:30. He had been out for thirty or forty minutes.

Michael told me that when they heard his story, the Sutton investigators burst out laughing. That’s when Michael learned, for the first time, that the window he had looked in was John Moxley’s, not Martha’s. John was out late that night, according to police reports.

Largely owing to Dunne’s retelling of the story, it would later become a common assumption that Michael had masturbated in the tree below which Martha’s body was discovered. In fact the two trees are on opposite sides of the Moxley house, 300 feet apart.

The Sutton files occupy thousands of pages, filling two file cabinets. At Sheridan’s request the company assembled draft “portfolios” that made hypothetical cases against Tom and Michael Skakel and Ken Littleton. These portfolios construct a prosecutor’s best case against each one. The one on Michael was titled “Michael Skakel, A Purposefully Prejudicial Analysis of Michael Skakel and his Testimony.” Sheridan recently told me why

According to Mark Fuhrman, the prosecutor’s staff told him that they planned to use *Murder in Greenwich* as a blueprint. In fact, the state followed his book practically line by line.

he had asked for scenarios to be constructed against any Skakel who might be considered a suspect: “My old man told me to always ask for the worst case. That way you know you’re not being bullshitted.” Murphy and Willis Krebs, a retired NYPD detective working for Sutton Associates, told me separately that they believed Michael Skakel was innocent.

In December of 1995 Leonard Levitt reported in *Newsday* that anonymous sources had informed him that both Tom and Michael had spoken to private investigators hired by the Skakel family and had elaborated on their whereabouts the night of the murder. The state attorney’s office publicly called for a full disclosure of Sutton’s findings—to no avail. When pieces of the report began to leak, Tom’s lawyer, Emanuel Margolis, who had opposed the Sutton project from the outset and had allowed Tom’s participation only reluctantly (Tom was still the only Skakel represented by counsel), demanded that all copies of the report and all underlying evidence be turned over to him. Margolis thought that the report might feed the ambitions of those among the investigators who seemed determined to blame Tom. According to Sheridan and Murphy, Margolis now has

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the only known full set of the Sutton files, which he keeps under lock and key. No member of the Skakel family has ever seen any part of the Sutton files except those portions of the prejudicial portfolios that subsequently appeared on the Internet.

Before Margolis gained control of the files, however, a twenty-year-old aspiring journalism student named Jamie Bryant, temporarily employed by Sutton to help write the scenarios, reportedly handed them over to Dominick Dunne in November of 1996, just as Dunne was leaving to cover the O.J. Simpson civil trial. Murphy told me that Bryant later told him he had stolen the portfolios in an effort to land a job at *Vanity Fair*. After reading them, Dunne passed the portfolios on to both Dorthy Moxley and Frank Garr.

Garr called the Greenwich detective Stephen Carroll and told him that he now considered Michael to be on the suspect list. After debating Michael's alibi, according to Mark Fuhrman, the police officers concluded he could not have committed the crime. Fuhrman, who later befriended Dorthy Moxley by promising to solve the murder, wrote that Garr explained to her at the time that the Sutton files were just speculative "scenarios."

Dunne got in touch with Fuhrman, who Dunne says he had come to admire during the O.J. trial. Fuhrman was then living in northern Idaho, having left the Los Angeles Police Department in disgrace after the O.J. trial. Dunne later wrote that when he got Fuhrman on the phone, he said, "Hey, Mark, I've got just the one for you, and I have a private detective report that's going to knock you on your ass."

MARK FUHRMAN

Dominick Dunne and Mark Fuhrman discussed the case intensely at a Four Seasons lunch in 1997. Dunne hosted a cocktail party for Fuhrman to introduce him to Connecticut law-enforcement officials. According to Murphy, both men had read the Sutton scenarios on Ken Littleton, Tom Skakel, and Michael, whom the Greenwich police had rejected as a serious suspect. In *Murder in Greenwich*, Fuhrman makes a stronger case against Tom than he does against Michael. Yet he declares Michael the killer.

With breathtaking ease, and without apology to Tom for the years of tormenting innuendo, Dunne turned his sights on Michael. "I firmly believe that Michael Skakel killed Martha Moxley," he declared on *Good Morning America* in March of 1999. On the CNN program *Burden of Proof*, when he was asked whether he believed that Michael Skakel did it, he replied, "That is what I absolutely firmly believe." To ease his own shift from Tom to Michael as the designated

murderer, Dunne simply made them partners in the cover-up. In January of 2000 Dunne told ABC News, "I firmly believe Michael Skakel killed Martha Moxley and that Tommy Skakel may have helped him move the body."

Fuhrman acknowledges in *Murder in Greenwich* that the Moxley murder attracted him because it reminded him of the Simpson case: "money, power, celebrity, deceit, corruption." On the day he began investigating the crime, he repeated this formulation to Greenwich police officers when they asked him about his interest in the case. Fuhrman had apparently decided before he began his investigation that the killer must be a wealthy, powerful celebrity who had corrupted the police.

In the book Fuhrman exposes the bias in one of his reasons for rejecting Littleton as a suspect, which he says he did "early on": "Littleton had no money, no powerful family behind him, no clout. If Littleton had murdered Martha Moxley, he would not have gotten away with it." Ignoring the fact that Littleton has changed his alibi five times, Fuhrman boldly concludes, "While other suspects have had trouble with their alibis, Littleton has always stuck to the same story." He explains Littleton's failure to pass five lie-detector tests over

a period of sixteen years by arguing, "If Littleton is a paranoid, psychotic, bipolar alcoholic, then how could [Greenwich police] expect him to pass any kind of polygraph?"

Garr dismissed Fuhrman's book to the *New York Daily News* as a cut-and-

While the original medical examiner sat idle, Connecticut's current chief medical examiner, Wayne Carver, was the expert witness on a case he had never worked on.

paste rewrite of old newspaper stories and police files, and the Greenwich police said that the book was "riddled with inaccuracies and contains no new information." Nevertheless, the book lit a fire beneath Connecticut law-enforcement officials. On July 10, 1998, one month after its publication, Connecticut authorities convened a one-man grand jury consisting of Judge George Thim. The state's attorney Jonathan Benedict took over the Moxley case and began a multimillion-dollar effort to convict Michael Skakel.

A banner on the paperback of *Murder in Greenwich* advertises it as "the book that spawned the Connecticut grand jury investigation." "I firmly believe," Dunne wrote in the October 2000 issue of *Vanity Fair*, "*Murder in Greenwich*, for which I wrote the introduction, is what caused a grand jury to be called after 25 years."

Right up until the convening of the grand jury, according to Fuhrman, the Greenwich police and state investigators still considered Ken Littleton to be their primary suspect. Why did they give him immunity? The state might have concluded that a prosecution of Littleton—especially if it failed, and any prosecution twenty-three years after the crime stood small chance of success—would not end the public de-

bate over their competence and integrity. Fuhrman and Dunne had already accused the police of giving the Skakels a pass by making Littleton the fall guy. In order to prosecute a Skakel they would need Littleton to testify without taking the Fifth—an action that might suggest to the jury that the witness rather than the defendant was guilty. The only way to compel Littleton to testify was to first grant him immunity. The case against Michael was weak, but by indicting a Skakel investigators could at least quiet Fuhrman's charges that they were "sycophants" and "cowards." Dunne had already sent signals that his objectives would be satisfied short of a conviction, as long as Michael was indicted. "I just want to see this guy with handcuffs—humiliated," he told *Burden of Proof*.

According to Fuhrman, members of Benedict's staff told him that they planned to use *Murder in Greenwich* as the blueprint for the prosecution. In fact, the state followed the book practically line by line. Michael's fuller account was to become the crux of the state's case against him. Adopting Fuhrman's theory, the state argued that Michael fabricated the masturbation story after learning that Henry Lee, the forensic scientist, was about to conduct DNA testing (which was not available in 1975) on evidence from the crime scene. According to Fuhrman, Michael took this precaution to explain the presence of his semen on Martha's body should any be found. In fact there was no semen found, Michael's or anyone else's.

There are numerous problems with Fuhrman's theory. First, the tree in which Michael said he had attempted to masturbate was a football field's length from where Martha's body was found. The story would therefore not have explained the presence of semen on or near Martha's body had any been found. Second, Michael did not invent the story in the early nineties for his Sutton interview; he has been telling it consistently for at least twenty-three years. Michael told the story to his aunt, Mary Ellen Reynolds, a former nun, in 1979; to his psychiatrists, Stanley Lese and Hyman Weitzen, in 1980; and to many friends before the 1990s. I heard him tell it several times, beginning in 1983. The prosecution's own witness Michael Meredith testified that he heard the story from Michael in 1987 while staying at the Skakel home. Michael's explanation for his failure to tell the story to the police in the first instance—adolescent embarrassment and fear of a wrathful father—is plausible. As Jay Leno suggested, referring to the Skakel trial, many people

would rather be found guilty of murder than be suspected of masturbating in a tree. Oddly, Michael's lawyer, Mickey Sherman, never defended Michael against the accusation that Michael had recently invented the story. I told Sherman several times during the trial that I would testify about Michael's pre-Sutton recounting, but I was never called.

Taking their cue from Fuhrman, prosecutors argued that Michael had killed Martha in a drunken, jealous rage after seeing his older brother kiss her. But Michael says, and other Skakels agree, that he was in love at the time with a family friend, Francine Ziminsky. "Martha was cute," he told me when I visited him in prison last September, "but every girl was cute to me." Michael says that he was unaware of any romance between Martha and his brother. "I never knew about Tom and Martha," he told me on the same visit, "until I heard it on TV in 1998."

The next challenge was Michael's alibi. Connecticut law-enforcement officials had in 1975 consulted the nation's pre-eminent forensic pathologist, Joseph Jachimczyk, who established the time of Martha's death as 10:00 P.M. He based his conclusion on the condition of Martha's bladder and the contents of her stomach. Martha had eaten a grilled cheese sandwich at around six o'clock, Dorothy Moxley said, and ice cream later; three ounces of undigested food was found during her autopsy. The stomach normally clears most food in two to three hours. That put the time of death between 9:30 and 10:00. The Connecticut police consulted Detroit's medical examiner, Werner Spitz, and two



Dominick Dunne (left) and Mark Fuhrman

New York City deputy chief medical examiners, Michael Baden and John Devlin. All of them generally concurred with Jachimczyk. The police also relied on nonmedical indicators: barking dogs, Martha's curfew, and Dorothy Moxley's testimony that she heard Martha cry out around 10:00. For twenty-five years the police operated under the assumption that the murder occurred around 10:00 P.M. Michael's account for that time had been consistent since 1975. Three witnesses—John Skakel, Jim Terrien, and Rush Skakel Jr.—all maintained from the first time they were questioned that they had left with Michael for the Terriens' house at 9:30, when Martha was still alive, and had returned at 11:20. John passed a polygraph test that the police felt covered all four.

"For Michael's accusers to be correct, the time of death had to be moved up" in order to get around his 10:00 alibi, Michael Baden, who later served as the chief medical examiner for New York City, recently told me. While consulting

with the Connecticut police in the Moxley case, Baden had become friendly with the Moxley family. At Dorthy Moxley's request, he acted as a liaison between the Greenwich police and Mark Fuhrman, who despised each other, while Fuhrman was researching *Murder in Greenwich*. In his book Fuhrman solved the problem of Michael's alibi by simply asserting that food can remain in the stomach for as long as six hours, and that the murder might therefore have occurred as late as 1:30 A.M.

At the trial Connecticut's former chief medical examiner, Elliot Gross—who had performed the autopsy and had been called to testify for the prosecution—was never put on the stand. Instead, while the original medical examiner sat idle, Connecticut's current chief medical examiner, Wayne Carver, was called as the expert witness on a case he had never worked on. Based on his reading of Gross's autopsy report, Carver testified that the murder might have occurred as late as 1:30. Sherman's cross-examination was anemic and brief. He asked Carver a single question: Could the murder have occurred at 9:30? Carver answered yes. Sherman sat down. When he read the transcript, Baden told me, "I was very surprised. He never asked Carver the key question: What was the basis of his opinion that the time of death could be both 9:30 and 1:30?"

Prosecutors relied heavily on the Fuhrman-Dunne view of the Skakels as conducting a coordinated cover-up. Both writers assume that all the Skakels concluded from the outset that

one of the boys had committed the murder, and immediately circled the wagons. Fuhrman says in his book that the Catskills trip was an "opportunity for the Skakels to confer away from Belle Haven and the Greenwich police." He writes, "If Littleton had committed the murder, I doubt the Skakels would have brought him up to Windham ... Since the hunting trip was most probably a legal confab, Littleton was brought along because he knew something—or the Skakels thought he knew something—that was very important." This theory became crucial to the prosecution's case—even though Littleton testified at the trial that it had been his idea to drive the boys to the Catskills for the weekend, to get them away from the ghoulish scene in Greenwich.

The theory of an intricately organized Skakel conspiracy is comical to anyone who knows the family—as neither Fuhrman nor Dunne does. Jim Terrien and Rush Jr. would have been critical to any such conspiracy, as would Tom Skakel. But neither Jim nor Rush was at Windham, though both Fuhrman and the prosecutors implied otherwise. Rush drove to Washington, D.C., on Halloween morning for a Georgetown University homecoming—unaware that Martha, whom he had never met, was dead. The prosecution's theory supposes that

Michael killed Martha in a jealous rage toward his "nemesis," brother Tom, who then helped Michael to cover up the murder of the girl with whom he'd had a sexual encounter only hours before. The theory requires that Michael, a drunken teenage murderer, had the clarity to clean himself up, dispose of the murder weapon, and take an active role in maintaining a conspiracy that remained drum-tight for nearly thirty years.

The Skakel clan may be troubled—alcoholism runs in the family, and although they are kind and generous to a fault, some family members can be impulsive, irresponsible, and reckless. They have made a series of disastrous decisions about how to handle this case. But they are not murderers or conspirators. They are deeply religious and lack the moral bankruptcy to carry personal loyalty to the level of depravity—much less the organizational discipline and the cohesiveness to either form or perpetuate such a conspiracy.

I have spoken to all the Skakels about the murder, and they are as confused as various investigators have been over the years about who committed the crime. I have heard different Skakels speculate about the possible guilt of a diverse list of suspects. (Interestingly, most of them told me they have long believed that the strongest evidence points not to

Ken Littleton but to Franz Wittine, the former Skakel gardener. After the police and private investigators turned their attention from Wittine to Littleton, early in the case, they never returned intensively to Wittine.) All of the Skakels want to see Martha's killer in jail.

**The Skakel clan may be troubled.
But they are not murderers or
conspirators. They lack the moral
bankruptcy to carry personal loyalty
to the level of depravity.**

None of them ever imagined that Michael would be charged, much less convicted of the crime.

But none of them would lie to protect Michael. Even when during the trial Julie understood Sherman's instructions as a "request to lie" under oath, she refused with the full support of her brothers. At the trial Andrea Shakespeare (now Renna) testified that the night of the murder, before being driven home by Julie Skakel after dinner, she was "under the impression" Michael was still in the Skakel house after the older boys had left for Jim Terrien's—highly ambiguous and uncertain testimony that nonetheless gave jurors reason to doubt Michael's alibi. According to Julie and Stephen Skakel, on the morning that Julie was to testify at Michael's trial, Sherman assembled the two of them; Sherman's legal assistant, Jason Throne; and his son, Mark, who is also a lawyer, at Julie's home. Sherman told Julie, she says, "You have to say that you remember that the boys were still at the house when you took Andrea home." Julie replied, "I can't, that's not true." Sherman admonished her, "You have to—it's the only way." Julie again refused. Stephen later found her weeping outside the courthouse. According to Stephen, she was devastated by the prospect

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that her refusal to lie might put Michael in jail. Stephen told me that he found Jason Throne and begged him to get Sherman to back off. "I told him, 'You can't do this, she's going to have a nervous breakdown.'"

Sherman denies that he ever told Julie to lie. "We would never have asked her to perjure herself," he told me. "I just asked her to add two and two and come up with four, not five or seven." He explained to me that the Skakels were difficult witnesses, refusing to testify even to obvious facts unless they had clear memories. He cited the example of Rush Jr., who clearly remembered Michael's being at the Terriens' but refused to testify that Michael was in the car that went to the house: twenty-seven years later, he had no clear memory of who was in the car. John Skakel refused to testify about any of the events that night, because he had no independent memories of the details of the evening. John would agree only to testify that he told the truth to the police in 1975; the police report records his saying that Michael was in the car and at the Terriens' house. "They were impossible to deal with," Sherman told me. The children's scrupulousness might have worked against Michael: post-verdict interviews quoted jury members as saying they regarded the Skakels' memory gaps not as the product of rigorous honesty but as obfuscation.

Connecticut prosecutors still had the problem of evidence. They had no fingerprints, no DNA, and no witnesses. There was a good deal of physical evidence, but none that could be tied to anyone. Where were the prosecutors to find witnesses to flesh out the Dunne-Fuhrman speculations?

REFORM-SCHOOL WITNESSES

Every Kennedy is painfully familiar with the attention seeker who fashions a chance encounter with a celebrity into a disparaging anecdote. Michael's notoriety made him a magnet for such people—and a February 1996 television program helped prosecutors corral a group of them. In an effort to invigorate the twenty-year-old investigation, Frank Garr arranged for NBC's *Unsolved Mysteries* to film a segment on the Moxley murder and to provide a telephone number for viewers with information on the crime. The phone calls came in—not about Tom or Littleton but, as Leonard Levitt later reported, about Michael. The calls came from former students at the Elan School who were eager to point the finger at him. Following a drunken car accident at age seventeen, Michael had, at his father's behest, been forced into Elan, which practices a controversial behavior-modification program that relies on peer confrontation. It turned out to be a snake pit where Michael was regularly beaten during the two years he was a resident.

Garr was aggressive in recruiting his witnesses, according to Diane Hozman, a therapist in California and a former Elan resident in whom Michael had confided during his time there. Hozman recently told me that she contacted Garr to help clear Michael of the charges when she realized he was investigating the crime. He flew her to Connecticut four times, once with her son and another time with her boyfriend. She said that she thought Garr was bullying and pressuring her into saying that Michael had confessed. "I felt they were desperate to blame Michael," she told me. "Garr took everything I said out of context to make it fit into his puzzle. He definitely didn't want to hear anything good about Michael. I'm sorry I even talked to Garr." The night before she was to testify, Hozman told the prosecution again that she did not believe that Michael had ever confessed. They sent her home without calling her to the stand.

The state called a total of seven Elan witnesses. Of them the two key witnesses were Gregory Coleman and John Higgins. Coleman, who bullied Michael and was assigned to guard him after a foiled escape, told the grand jury in September of 1998 that Michael had introduced himself to him by saying, "I'm going to get away with murder and I'm a Kennedy."

This highly unlikely statement became tabloid fodder and colored public attitudes toward Michael Skakel.

Coleman told the grand jury that while at Elan he had heard Michael confess to the murder five or six times. At Michael's probable-cause hearing, two years later,

Coleman amended that estimate to two times. To explain the discrepancy, Coleman said he had shot heroin an hour before his grand-jury testimony. He admitted to shooting twenty to twenty-five bags a day and said that he was on methadone during the probable-cause hearing. He was incarcerated at the time and had made two requests to Connecticut authorities for cash and a reduced sentence in return for his testimony. Coleman swore that Michael told him he had killed Martha with a driver and had gone to visit her body two days later. In fact the golf club used to murder Martha was an iron, and the police removed her body the next day.

Coleman died of an overdose before the trial. But the trial judge, John F. Kavanewsky Jr., allowed his earlier testimony to be read to the jury, although there would be no opportunity for Michael's attorneys to cross-examine Coleman at the trial or for the jury to view his ruined demeanor. The confession Coleman described is inconceivable to anyone who knows Michael, beginning with Michael's alleged declaration "I'm a Kennedy"—a phrase no Skakel would be caught dead saying. Coleman's recollection is similar to a *National Enquirer* headline shortly after Michael's arrest, which quoted Michael as allegedly telling Harry Kranick, another Elan

The "confession" is inconceivable to anyone who knows Michael, beginning with his alleged declaration "I'm a Kennedy"—a phrase no Skakel would be caught dead saying.

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character, “I killed that chick ... it got me excited.” Kranick denied that he ever heard Michael Skakel make any of the reported statements; otherwise the police would certainly have made him testify. Judging by his behavior, Coleman himself never expected to testify. He had waited twenty years to tell his story, and did so in an anonymous call to a local NBC affiliate. The station got in touch with the Connecticut police after tracking Coleman through caller ID.

John Higgins was another Elan bully. At the trial Higgins said that he had been on guard duty with Michael when Michael spontaneously began relating his memories of the Moxley murder. According to Higgins, Michael recalled a party that night at the Skakel house, after which he rummaged in the garage for golf clubs; he remembered running through pine trees afterward and waking up at home. That story is obviously contrived. There was no party that evening, and there has never been a garage at the Skakel house. Higgins refused to sign a formal statement, take a polygraph, or allow the police to tape his phone calls to them. They recorded him anyway, and used the tape to force him to testify at the trial. Higgins later admitted to lying to Garr about his knowledge of Michael’s confession.

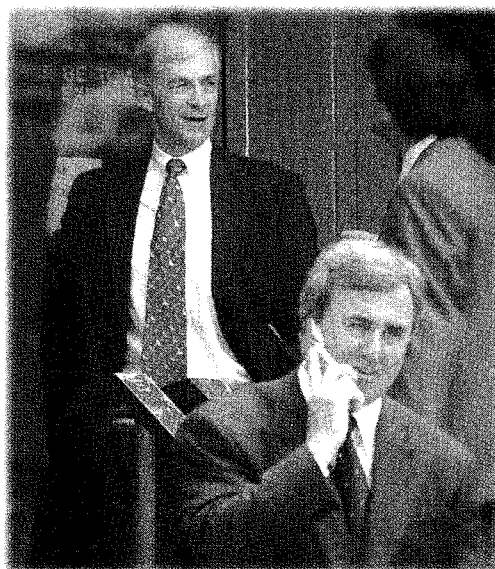
Other Elan witnesses testified that they had never heard Michael confess while at Elan. Higgins “had a reputation for not being truthful,” one witness said, and “seemed to really like making Mike Skakel’s life miserable.” For two years Michael was continually spat upon, slapped, and deprived of sleep. He was serially beaten with hoses and by students wearing boxing gloves, forced to wear a dunce cap and a toilet seat around his neck, and subjected to a long inventory of other tortures. Upon Michael’s arrival at the school, its owner, Joseph Ricci, who came from a town neighboring Greenwich and was aware of the Moxley murder, told him he would never leave the facility until he admitted that Tom Skakel had committed the crime. Elan’s administration encouraged students to accuse Michael himself of Martha’s murder as part of the school’s humiliation therapy. Students like Coleman and Higgins had incentives to report such confessions; they would have been rewarded with extra privileges and elevated status and power. Their claims that Michael had confessed while at Elan and that they then kept his secret are, according to other Elan witnesses, incredible. Referring to Coleman’s and Higgins’s testimony, Joseph Ricci told *Time* magazine that “the notion of Michael’s confession is just preposterous.” Ricci said, “I was there, and I would

know.” The facility had only a hundred students, and if Michael had confessed, “two things would have happened,” Ricci said. “Everybody in the facility would have known and talked about it. And we would have called our lawyers to figure out our obligations. Neither happened.” Unfortunately for Michael, Ricci died immediately before the trial, so the jury never heard his testimony.

Geranne Ridge, not an Elan student but a self-described “part-time model,” testified that in the spring of 1997 Michael was at a party she alone remembers, in her apartment—which Michael and a mutual friend of Ridge’s and Michael’s say Michael never visited. Ridge claims that she overheard Michael saying, “Ask me why I killed my neighbor.” That is the exact wording of a chin-to-ankle sign Michael was forced to carry for two months at Elan. The sign was thoroughly discussed in such tabloids as *The Star*, *The National Enquirer*, and the *Globe*. Ridge admitted on the stand that she had lied when she told a friend in a conversation that he secretly taped that Michael had confessed to the crime. She admitted that her story of Michael’s confession was “BS” invented to impress a friend. She acknowledged that she had come forward only because the friend had handed the tape to the police.

Finally, the prosecution produced Matthew Tucciarone, a hairdresser from the Golden Touch Salon, in Greenwich. Tucciarone claimed that Michael, Rush Jr., and Julie came for haircuts in the spring of 1976. As Tucciarone clipped his hair, Michael conversed with his siblings and said, “I’m going to get a gun and kill him.” To this, according to Tucciarone, Julie responded, “You can’t do that.” Michael then said, “Why not? I did it before. I killed before,” and Julie reportedly answered, “Shut up, Michael.”

Tucciarone described Julie as having a ponytail and showing her navel. At that time Julie had short hair and would never have exposed her navel. “Dad would have grounded her for a year,” Stephen Skakel told me. “Absolutely not,” Julie said when I asked her if she would ever have dressed that way. Moreover, Julie testified that she, Rush Jr., and Michael would not have gone for haircuts together during that era. The Skakel siblings went to Mike’s barbershop as youngsters and later used Subway Barber. No Skakel, the family told me, has ever been to the Golden Touch Salon or met Tucciarone. Coincidentally, according to Tucciarone, Michael’s confession occurred on the one day of the week Tucciarone was working alone in the salon—a holiday when the entire Skakel family always left town. Tucciarone waited



Mickey Sherman (front) and Jonathan Benedict

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twenty-six years to tell his tale: he came forward only after casually relating it to one of his customers, a Stamford sheriff, who urged him to report it to the state attorney's office.

These witnesses have so little credence that it's hardly worth describing them. In many cases they had changed or retracted their stories before the trial began, but were called to testify nonetheless. And the jury believed them. In each case the witness did not initially go to the police but bragged about the story to an acquaintance or to the media, who then notified the police. How likely is it that Michael Skakel, who endured years of torture at Elan during which he refused to admit any guilt, would suddenly "confess" to these crackpots but never to any person he knew or trusted?

Prosecutors also relied heavily on another alleged confession—one with which I, as it happens, am familiar. Many years ago Michael told me a story with his customary honesty and humor. At age sixteen he had once draped himself in a dress of his late mother's and fallen asleep in his room. His father discovered him and went wild. Michael called a family handyman who sometimes drove the children and asked to go to his psychiatrist's office, in New York City, although he did not have an appointment. The driver testified that during the ride Michael said "he had done something very bad and he either had to kill himself or get out of the country." On the way back to Belle Haven, the driver continued, Michael tried to jump off the Triborough Bridge. The prosecution offered that statement

as a confession to the Moxley murder. In fact, despite widespread press reports to the contrary, Michael never said he was the murderer—to the driver or to anyone else. The handyman never intended to come forward with the story, but not long before the trial he offhandedly told his bank manager, who reported it to the authorities.

MICKEY SHERMAN

Michael's problems were aggravated by an overconfident and less than zealous defense lawyer who seemed more interested in courting the press and ingratiating himself with Dominick Dunne than in getting his client acquitted. To defend Michael the Skakels had hired Mickey Sherman, a high-profile partner in a small Stamford law firm, at the recommendation of Emanuel Margolis, Tom's lawyer—a recommendation Margolis now deeply regrets. Sherman promoted himself as a public-relations expert who could undo the damage to the family's reputation caused by nearly a decade of Dunne's accusations. His appetite for the limelight turned out to be as voracious as Dunne's—but he was a much less effective spokesman.

Soon before the trial began, the *Greenwich Time* quoted

Sherman as saying that his relations with Court TV had turned him into a "television lawyer." "We make fools of ourselves," he was quoted as saying, "in return for limo rides and cheap doughnuts in greenrooms." (Sherman now says he "disavows" that report.) The family was distressed by Sherman's seeming lack of attention to the trial, what they saw as his failure to prepare them adequately before their testimony, and his undisguised friendship with Dominick Dunne. On at least one occasion Sherman arrived at court in a limousine with Dunne; he spent at least one evening at Dunne's house, at a party. The day after the conviction Sherman told me that he was going to a Court TV party for Dunne. When I questioned the propriety of his attending, he said, "We're friends. What can I say, I'm a kiss-ass." (He now claims not to remember making this remark, but he recently said, "I make no apology for being cordial to Dunne. I got valuable information from him over the years.")

Following Michael's conviction Sherman started CNN staffers with an unscheduled greenroom appearance to visit Dominick Dunne and Dorthy Moxley as the three awaited separate *Larry King Live* interviews. He told Moxley that he was "happy" for her. Dunne instantly reported the remark. At

Michael's sentencing Sherman, quoting a probation report, said that Michael was "an entirely different person today than he was at fifteen." Both statements left public doubt that Sherman believed in his client's innocence—although Sherman protests that this was not his

The jury was eager to give the Moxleys justice. Sherman pointed out that the case was like musical chairs, and Michael Skakel got caught standing when the music stopped.

intent and told me he is certain that Michael is innocent.

Perhaps in recognition of Dunne's solicitude toward Ken Littleton, Sherman refused, Julie said, to allow her or the other Skakels to testify about the strong evidence against Littleton. When I asked Sherman during the trial why he was not aggressively questioning Littleton, he said, "He's a pathetic creature. I don't want to look like I'm beating up on him." When Sherman called Jack Solomon to the stand, Solomon appeared with a three-ring binder containing nearly three decades' worth of police information about Littleton and a summary of the state's case against him. That information might have proved critically valuable to Michael's defense. Sherman did not have the binder marked as an exhibit or placed in evidence.

Even before the trial began, Sherman failed to make an interlocutory appeal based on Michael's strongest legal argument—that the court no longer had jurisdiction to hear a case against anyone who was accused of a murder that took place in 1975, because at the time the statute of limitations for murder was five years. Sherman says that he thought the right time for such an appeal was "after the final judgment." (A state supreme court decision on the statute of limitations is now pending.) "The

whole point of an interlocutory appeal,” however, as Hope Seeley, the lawyer in charge of Michael’s appeal, recently explained, “is not to have to wait for a final judgment—or endure the expense and emotion of a lengthy trial.” An early victory in such an appeal would have deprived Sherman of the nationally publicized trial he expected would boost his career.

By the time Sherman’s behavior became worrisome to the Skakels, it was too late to change lawyers, Julie told me: “We’d already paid Mickey a million dollars, and at that point it was too much.” The family had originally been persuaded, they said, by Sherman’s charm and confidence, and especially by his frequent assurances before the trial that he was in control and there was no chance Michael would be convicted.

Sherman allowed the seating on the jury of a policeman (unheard of in the world of criminal defense) and of someone who admitted to sharing a friend with the Moxleys. At the time, trial watchers were amazed at the speed of the jury selection and called it “unprecedented” for this type of case. Most disturbing, Sherman, as noted above, proved inept in countering Andrea Shakespeare Renna’s ambiguous testimony that she was “under the impression” that Michael was in the Skakel house when she left. A more skillful cross-examination of Renna would have clearly revealed the weakness of her claim, since she could never give any explanation of her belief that Michael did not go to the Terriens’. Sherman should have objected to Renna’s testimony because it was speculation not based on personal knowledge.

During the trial Sherman seemed more interested in trying to convince the members of the jury that he was affable and the press that he was television-ready. Judging by their subsequent remarks, he instead disgusted them. And despite the \$150,000 the family says Sherman billed them for time he spent with the media, the public’s impression of Michael Skakel couldn’t have been more negative. Given the gift that every great defense lawyer yearns for, a genuinely innocent paying client, Sherman squandered a fortune and sacrificed Michael on the altar of his ego.

MICHAEL SKAKEL

The person who murdered Martha Moxley was a demon—mean and vicious. Dunne and Fuhrman’s portrayal therefore required that Michael be demonized. Dunne depicted Michael as a spoiled rich kid with unlimited money and a lavish lifestyle, and claimed that his father had feigned mental illness to avoid testifying in

court. In fact Rushton Skakel suffers from debilitating and progressive dementia, diagnosed in 1992. Except on rare occasions he is unable to recognize his children. His attorneys and his children are now selling Rushton’s house, liquidating trusts, and pooling family funds to pay Michael’s legal bills. Since the conviction the family has come together, taking an active interest in the quality of Michael’s legal representation and becoming thoroughly familiar with the details of his case. They hired the firm of Santos and Seeley to represent him in his appeal, which most likely will be heard in September.

Rather than being someone who “wallowed in” self-pity, as Dunne suggests, or is overwhelmed by his troubles, Michael remains highly motivated. He got sober in 1982, at age twenty-one, and has given his life to service ever since. Dunne portrays a man riding on his relationship with the Kennedys. But Michael never identified himself as a

“Kennedy cousin.” On the contrary, the Kennedy and Skakel families were never close. The Skakels were Republicans who took steps against my father that my mother considered hurtful, and the families’ relationship was distant for many years. I rarely saw the Skakel boys growing up, and would not have been able to identify Michael or his brothers in 1975. The Skakels have a rightful pride in their own family.

When I finally did get to know Michael, he was struggling with addiction. For twenty years I have watched him overcome, with notable personal strength, his genetic

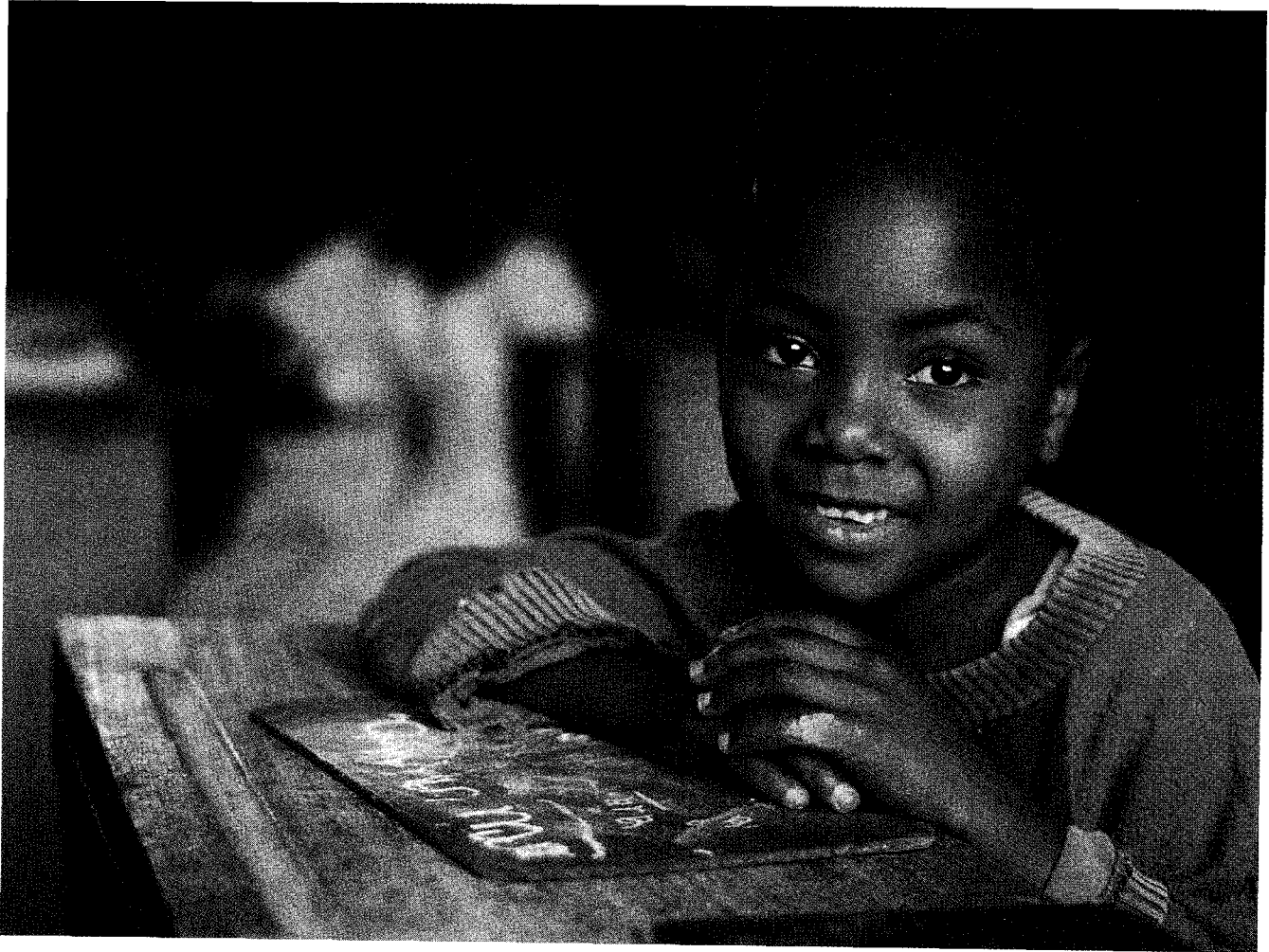
and cultural burdens and make himself a productive member of society. After getting sober he went back to school, fought an uphill battle against dyslexia, and graduated from Curry College. Despite his bulk, he is a superb athlete, and his hard work and brutal training regimen earned him a place on the U.S. national speed-skiing team in 1993. In October he celebrated twenty years of sobriety without any slips. His primary passion is helping other alcoholics in recovery.

Almost nothing the press wrote about Michael was true. Dominick Dunne made himself the arbiter in virtually every public discussion about the Moxley case: he promoted his agenda in *Vanity Fair* and on practically every talk show on the air. He branded Michael with a new first name, “Kennedy cousin,” and drove the national press into a *Lord of the Flies* frenzy to lynch the fat kid. Unfortunately, the national press corps, seduced by a celebrity trial, rarely questioned Dunne’s



Michael Skakel, June 2000

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mischaracterizations. And the Skakels were hampered in defending both Tom and Michael by their principled unwillingness to point the finger at another suspect.

As someone who grew up revering the American justice system as nearly infallible, I share Dominick Dunne's indignation that a skillful defense lawyer, in the service of a wealthy client, can get a guilty defendant acquitted. However, it is even more dismaying that, as every district attorney knows, a skillful prosecutor can persuade a jury to convict an innocent man—a fact attested to by the numerous DNA exonerations of death-row inmates in recent years. As Dunne and Fuhrman know, juries make mistakes. The law acknowledges the power of a prosecutor's office in the doctrine of "prosecutorial discretion," which allows prosecutors to refuse a winnable case if they believe that injustice might result. A prosecutor has a duty to exercise independent judgment and not cave in to public opinion or the goading of a celebrity journalist. But sometimes political heat leads a prosecutor to proceed with a case when his better judgment tells him to take a pass.

In the Moxley case, after resisting the temptation to prosecute for twenty-three years, Connecticut gave Littleton full immunity and then spent millions to convict Michael. The prosecution had so little faith in its underlying case that during the trial Dorothy Moxley had to make a public plea for more witnesses to come forward, and Jonathan Benedict made a last-minute attempt to add to the original charges a manslaughter count, which carried the possibility of no jail time. But that was before Benedict's brilliant summation. During the last ten minutes Benedict unveiled a dramatic and sophisticated multimedia display that some legal analysts have since criticized as deceptive and prejudicial. The display superimposed Michael's statements, out of context, on gruesome pictures of Martha's slain body. In a 1998 taped interview with a ghostwriter for what was to be an autobiography, Michael had described his reaction when he was awakened in a daze on Halloween morning by Dorothy Moxley. "Michael, have you seen Martha?" she asked. Michael did not then know that Martha was dead; he said on the tape that he was panicked that Mrs. Moxley might have witnessed his masturbating—a context never explained by the prosecution when they played the tape for the jury. "And I was like, 'Oh, my God, did they see me last night?' And I'm like I don't know and I remember just having a feeling of panic, like, oh shit you know like my worry of what I went to bed with, I don't know. You know what I mean, I had a feeling of panic."

As the prosecution played the audiotape, Michael's words appeared on a giant screen, turning red and exploding in size. Each time Michael said the word "panic," the display flashed a crime-scene photo of Martha's body. Observers, including Dominick Dunne, credited Michael's conviction to this dramatic summation.

There were at least four other suspects against whom the state could have marshaled enough circumstantial evidence

to indict. With Benedict's brilliant techniques and a jury eager to give the Moxleys justice, any of those suspects might have been convicted. The desire for closure apparently trumped the critical principle that guilt must be established beyond a reasonable doubt. It was Mickey Sherman who pointed out that the case was like musical chairs, and that Michael Skakel got caught standing when the music stopped.

"Notorious crimes have to be very carefully prosecuted," Michael Baden, New York's former chief medical examiner, recently told me, "because it is so easy to get a conviction without physical evidence. This is the very time to be more cautious, not less cautious, so that a bad decision isn't made because of an inflamed public. Look at the five kids in the Central Park jogger case. There was no trace evidence—but with notorious cases, jurors can find you guilty anyway."

Dunne continues to make an industry out of the Moxley murder. Most recently he parlayed his role in the case into a new Court TV series he hosts—*Dominick Dunne's Power, Privilege and Justice*. Mark Fuhrman has also done well: the USA Network last fall aired a highly fictionalized docudrama based on Fuhrman's *Murder in Greenwich*, lionizing Fuhrman for his role in solving the Moxley murder. According to press reports, Fuhrman's newest book is a far-fetched effort to link the death by alcoholic overdose of a man named Christopher O'Connor, last seen being beaten by bouncers outside a Queens nightclub, to the Kennedy family.

Dunne's objective since 1991 has been to link the crime to a "Kennedy cousin," whether it was Will Smith, John Kennedy, Tom Skakel, or Michael Skakel. Describing the day of Michael's guilty verdict, Dunne crowed in *Vanity Fair*, "The whole courtroom stared at [Michael], transfixed by his humiliation. This trial has ruined a once proud family. Their besmirched name will outlive them all." In *Vanity Fair*'s December issue Dunne makes the wild claim (which he repeated on *Larry King Live*) that he has information from a mysterious source that four others were involved in cleaning up the crime scene with Michael.

Dunne says he has "contempt for the behavior of the Skakel family" because they came from privilege and abused it. Fuhrman echoes him: "[The Skakels] lived a privileged existence" and they "frequently abused that privilege." But the capacity to write, to publish, and to hold public attention are privileges that Dunne and Fuhrman have abused. The media have duties too.

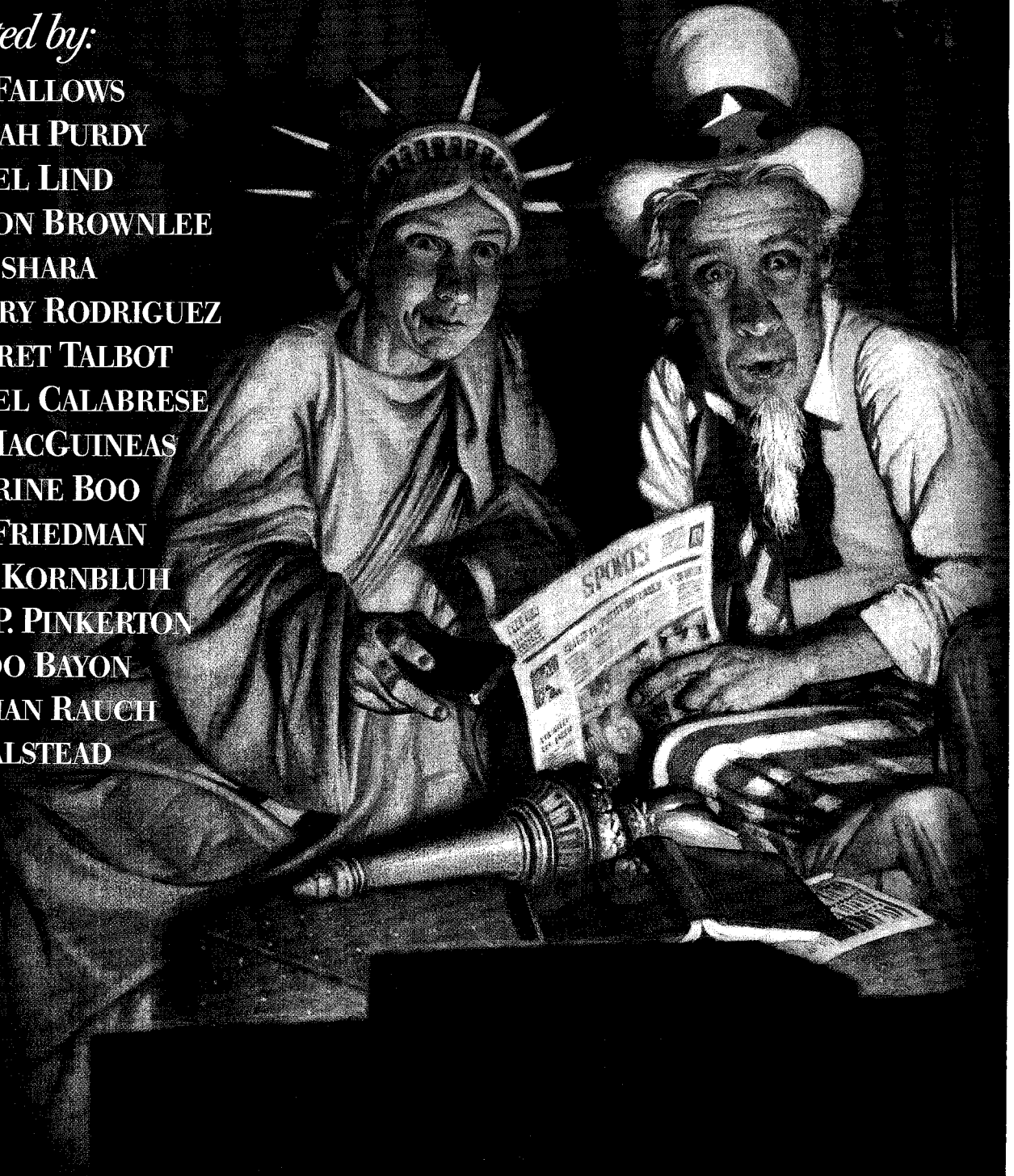
At its best, every profession—law, science, medicine, journalism—is a search for the truth. But personal bias can distort and pervert that mission. As one who has experienced the murder of family members, I sympathize with Dunne's anguish over his daughter's murder. But the worst dishonor to her memory is that her death has inspired not a search for justice but a campaign of revenge, with an innocent man its victim. ■

Robert F. Kennedy Jr. is an environmental attorney and a professor at Pace University Law School.

THE REAL STATE OF THE UNION

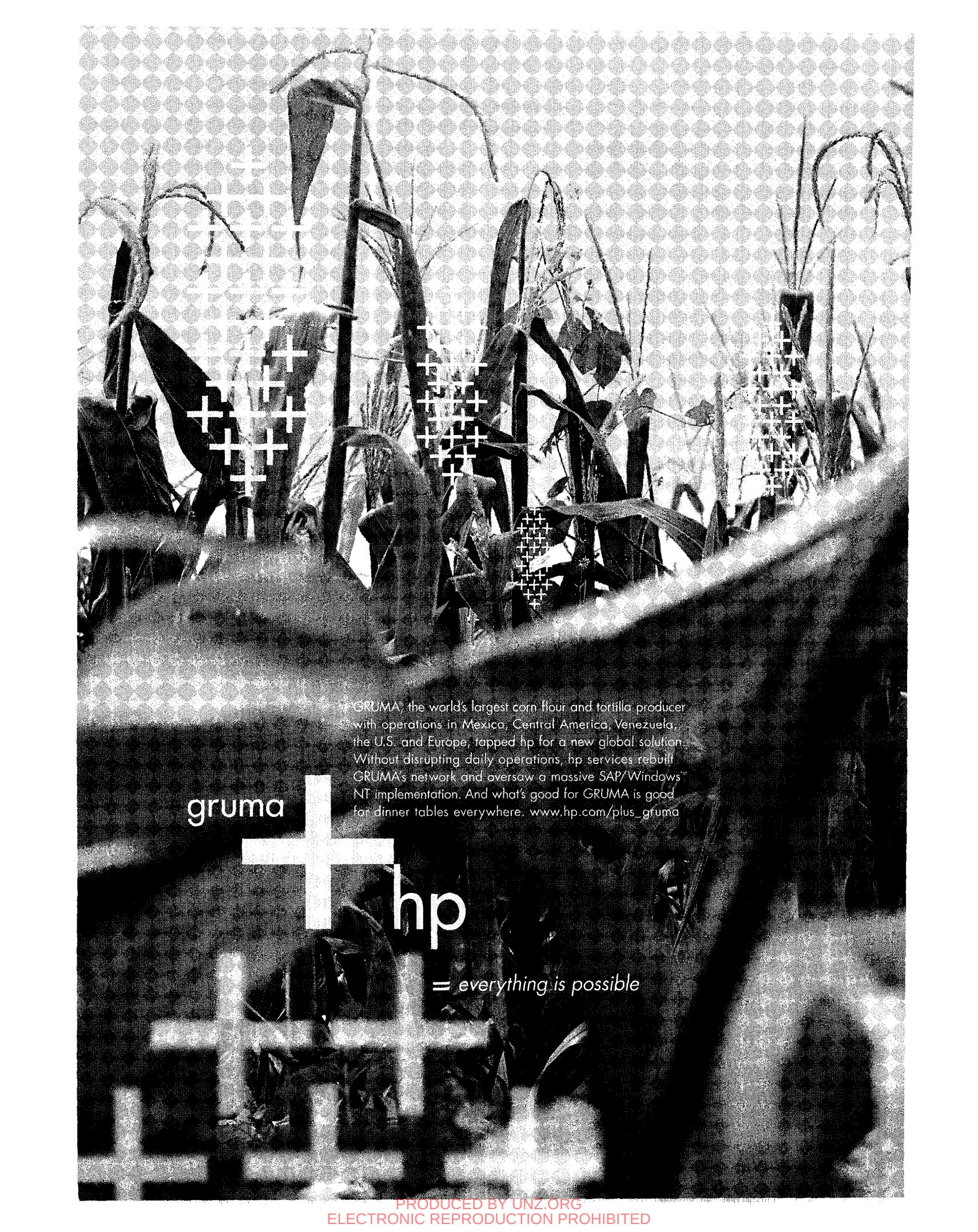
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THE REAL STATE OF THE UNION

[Introduction]

THE FORGOTTEN HOME FRONT

*What are the main elements of national well-being?
It is startling how out-of-date and out-of-touch
our official politics has become*

BY JAMES FALLOWS

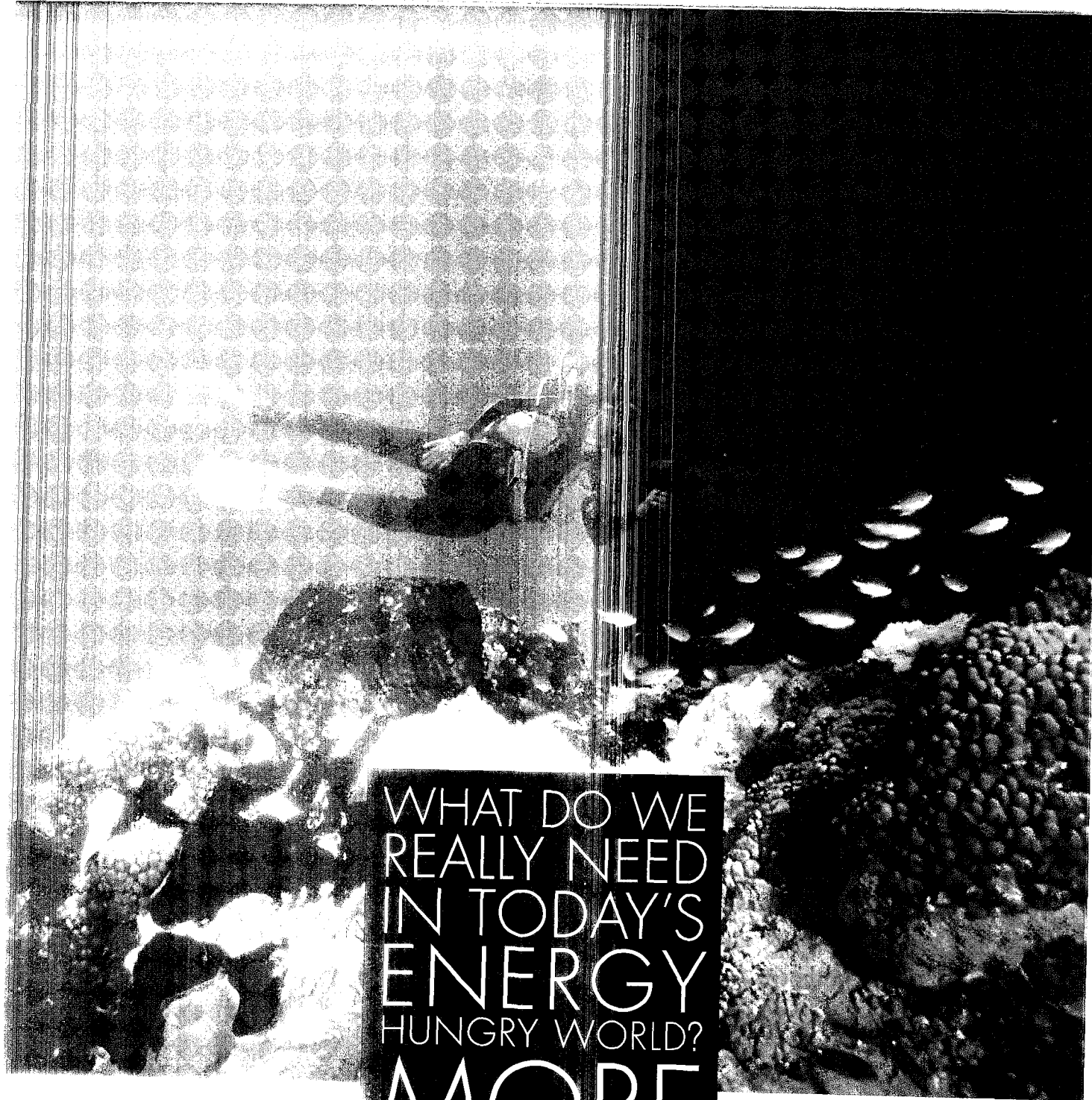
Illustrations by Steve Brodner

At kabuki performances in Japan audiences sometimes exclaim “*Matte mashita!*” during crucial points in the drama. In context this means something like “Here it comes!” or “This is what we’ve been waiting for!” and it greets the best-known lines in the play. If American theatergoers followed the same custom, people would yell “*Matte mashita!*” when they heard “To be or not to be ...” in *Hamlet* or “I’ll be back” in a Terminator movie.

In American political culture, which displays some of the same affection for formulaic stagecraft, the theatrical highlight of the year is the State of the Union address. Presidents have presented Congress with reports on the state of national affairs since the republic’s beginning, as required by the Constitution. But since Woodrow Wilson established the modern custom of a President’s delivering the report in person, in a speech to a special session of Congress, the State of the Union address has evolved into the main kabuki-like ceremony in our national politics.

Even more than the inauguration, the State of the Union has become a ritual celebration of the glory of the presidency. At an inauguration the excitement surrounding the President is often tempered by the pathos of an old President’s being ushered off the scene. The State of the Union is all about the incumbent.

With live TV cameras on them, representatives and even proud senators fidget in a packed House chamber until the President arrives. Foreign diplomats troop in to pay the world’s respects to America’s leader. The military chiefs of staff, in their uniforms, are there; the justices of the Supreme Court, in their robes; the members of the Cabinet—minus one, who will take over the government in case of disaster. Honored guests, whose achievements will be praised in the speech, are seated near the President’s spouse. With all the supporting cast in place, the sergeant at arms comes to the chamber’s door—and the President makes his way toward the dais through a crowd of cheering politicians from both parties, many reaching to touch him as he moves by. He stands at the front of the chamber until the cheers finally die—and as soon as they do, the speaker of the House plays his role in the drama. He tells his colleagues that he has the “high privilege and the distinct honor in presenting to you the President of the United States.” As he utters these words, another minutes-long standing ovation begins.



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On it goes for most of the next hour: the President's backers cheering the partisan items in his list of proposals, the opposition sitting noticeably still at those moments. The Vice President and the speaker of the House, onstage props visible whenever the President is on camera, try to sit still at all times. Perhaps at the beginning of the speech, perhaps at the end, the President builds toward his *Matte mashita!* line. "The state of the union," he tells the crowd—which prepares to cheer, knowing that the expected sentence has arrived—"is good."

Or perhaps it's not just "good." It was good "with room for improvement" according to Gerald Ford as he prepared to leave office in 1977; and it was "sound" according to Jimmy Carter the following year. For Bill Clinton in 1995, speaking after his party had been routed in midterm elections, the state of the union was merely "stronger than it was two years ago." By the end of his second term Clinton was ready to declare the state of the union "the strongest it has ever been." George W. Bush began his State of the Union address one year ago, as bombs fell in Afghanistan, with the speech's punch line, an artful two-sentence version of the usual one-liner: "As we gather tonight, our nation is at war, our economy is in recession, and the civilized world faces unprecedented dangers. Yet the state of our union has never been stronger."

In its substance as in its procedural pomp, the State of the Union address has come to represent all that is ritualistic and insiderish about modern politics. It is the one major speech a President is sure to deliver each year. Therefore, the day after one address has been given, much of the government gears up to influence the content of the next year's. The impetus comes in the coded language of Washington: a sentence here about the "high priority" of some new education program, which can be used to defend an extra \$100 million in budget requests; a mention there of a "strong new partnership" with a certain country, which can settle a dispute between the State Department and the Pentagon. Speechwriters dread this speech as they do no other assignment (or at least I did, when working for Jimmy Carter), because so many forces conspire to make it a clogged, committee-bred document whose hidden signals the ordinary listener will completely miss. The closest thing to a memorable line in recent addresses was Bill Clinton's declaration, in 1996, that "the era of big government is over."

The oddity of this situation is that although the State of the Union in the Washington sense has become stylized and removed from everyday American concerns, the real state of the union is of enormous social and cultural interest. Pollsters have known for years that one question above all indicates Americans' satisfaction with public life and confidence in their leaders—the question that is typically phrased as "In general, do you feel that things in America are moving in the right direction or the



wrong direction?" This is another way of asking whether the state of the union is sound—and when answering the question, people consider a wide range of concerns: How they and their family members are doing, materially and spiritually. What they observe or believe about others. What they think the future will bring. To what extent they feel in control of events, rather than feeling like objects or victims. Some components of this real state of the union are purely private matters, but many others are part of the environment that public life is supposed to help determine. The education system, the robustness of the national economic base, the physical safety of citizens, their pride in what the nation stands for—these and many other areas involve politics to some degree.

That the components of the real state of the union are complex and subjective doesn't mean they can't be discussed—and in many cases measured. An attempt to think broadly and originally about these elements of national well-being lies behind this special section. Some of the essays that follow offer specific action plans; others identify trends to watch. And although they are political in the broadest sense, most don't bother with comparisons of the Democratic and Republican positions on the subject at hand. The assumption is that in most of the areas under discussion the major-party platforms are essentially fundraising tools or ways to organize blocs of interest groups.

This first presentation, in what is planned as an ambitious ongoing effort to measure and assess national well-

being, is deliberately confined to domestic policy. In part that is a corrective. The national discussion of the past year, in this magazine as elsewhere, has naturally emphasized the fight against terrorism, and America's new place in the world. But the main reason for the concentration on issues within our national borders is our conviction that in the long run, domestic policy matters most. America's wars have changed the world, mainly for the better, and they have had deep effects on the country's social and economic institutions. World War II led to official desegregation. The Cold War brought a government-funded scientific establishment. But the signature turning points in American history have mainly been defined by what happened inside the country: immigration, expansion, economic growth, economic difficulties. Over time the domestic strength of a country gives it the material and moral force to play a role in the world. And no President named George Bush need wonder what happens politically to those who forget about the domestic economy.

Lasting principles and clear, simple statements do rise above the specifics of any situation. But it is startling how out-of-date and out-of-touch each party's platform seems when compared with the details in the essays that follow. Indeed, if one theme emerges from these essays, it is how disconnected our official politics has become from the real-world, fast-changing, interesting-in-their-details elements that constitute our national welfare. After the recent midterm elections everyone said that the Democrats had suffered because they had run out of good ideas. That was partly true. But the Republicans don't have much to brag about either. The Democrats have over the past two years stood for the ideas that the Republican tax policy was unfair but not unfair enough to actually vote against, and that the Administration's strategy toward Iraq was rash but not rash enough to oppose. Meanwhile, the Republican domestic agenda can without too much violence be summarized as: reduce income taxes and eliminate the "death tax."

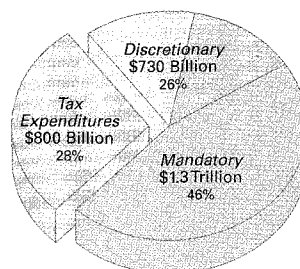
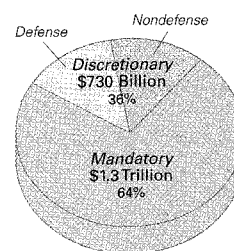
Americans have traditionally been vain about their pragmatism. Let the French have their *philosophes*, the British and the Germans their aristocrats who stand on ceremony. Ours would be the culture of the doer, the tinkerer, the keen observer who noticed what actually worked. In ideal form the American leader would be a Benjamin Franklin, with lofty interests but an unshakably realistic bent. Better, he would be a Lincoln: a true visionary who also recognized that the drunken General Grant was the best man for the job.

Lincoln, too, issued State of the Union messages, at a time when the existence of the union itself was in question. His second, in 1862, is the most memorable. "The dogmas of the quiet past, are inadequate to the stormy present," he said. "As our case is new, so we must think anew, and act anew." We offer these essays in that spirit. ▀

James Fallows is a national correspondent for The Atlantic.

THE REAL STATE OF THE BUDGET

The conventional view of the U.S. federal budget is that it totals \$2 trillion, with roughly one third going to pay for discretionary programs (such as military planes or health-care research) and the other two thirds going to pay for entitlement programs (such as Social Security and Medicare) and interest on the national debt.



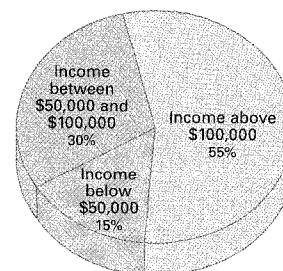
But tax expenditures—subsidies that run through the tax code and which the government pays for, in effect, through forgone tax revenues—account for another \$800 billion, resulting in a "hidden budget."

The five largest federal tax expenditures are (in billions):

Exclusion for pension contributions and earnings for employer-sponsored plans	\$88
Exclusion for employer contributions for health care	\$69
Deduction for home-mortgage interest	\$67
Reduced tax rates for capital gains	\$65
Deduction for state and local income and personal-property taxes	\$45

Share of tax expenditures going directly to corporations 11%

How is the hidden budget spent? Of the money included in the five largest tax expenditures, more than 50 percent is spent on households making above \$100,000 a year—and only 15 percent is spent on those with incomes below \$50,000 a year. In short, most of the hidden money in the budget benefits upper-middle-class Americans.



BUDGET FACTS

Percentage of real budget (\$2.8 trillion) spent in various areas

Retirement	24%
Health care	20%
Defense	12%
Low-income families	12%
Education	2%

Ratio of dollars spent per senior to dollars spent per child 8:1

[Trust]

SUSPICIOUS MINDS

Too much trust can actually be a bad thing—a polity of suckers is no better than a nation of cynics. But Americans' steadily declining faith in one another is a warning

BY JEDEDIAH PURDY

Without trust, social life is all but impossible. We walk down the street unarmed, invest our money with strangers, and pay taxes—all because we trust that nobody will mug us, take the cash to Cancún, or use government revenue to enrich a family company. The only other way to coordinate complex activity is coercion—which, as the Soviets learned, is neither efficient nor pleasant. Today, when your credit-card number makes regular trips to Bangalore and Ghana, start-ups get their money from millions of pensioners and private investors, and you put your life in the hands of several federal bureaucracies whenever you fly or take a train, trust is holding up the world. We had all better hope this Atlas does not shrug.

Yet in recent decades Americans have expressed declining confidence in government, business, civic institutions, religious establishments, and one another. Trust in the government has fallen by about half since its peak, in 1966. Sixteen percent of Americans—compared with 55 percent in 1966—say they have “a great deal of confidence” in major companies; and the share that trusts organized religion is down by almost half, to 23 percent. These declines embrace a fair amount of jumping about, but they are declines nonetheless. Meanwhile, the proportion of Americans who believe that most other people are trustworthy has fallen steadily since 1960, from about 55 percent to just above 30 percent.

Trust in government peaked before the controversy over Vietnam got ugly and has since dragged through two troughs: 1974 to 1980 (the seven years after Watergate) and 1990 to 1994. It has recently been rising. Trust in business was very low in the late 1980s and bottomed out in 1991, following the Black Monday stock crash of 1987 and the

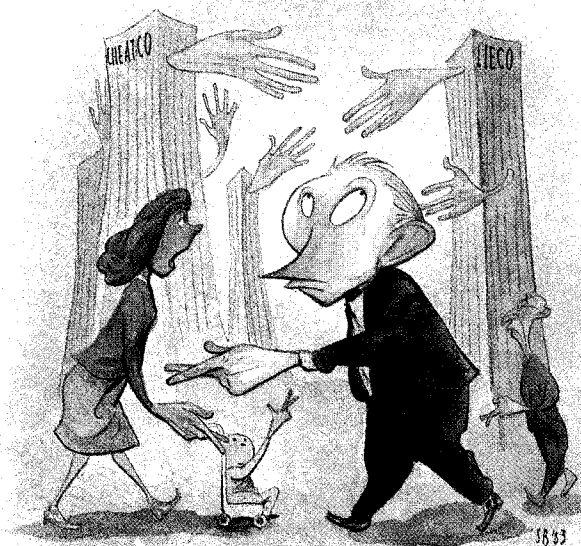
savings-and-loan scandals. It rose smartly through the 1990s, until the NASDAQ collapse and the latest round of corporate-accounting scandals. Trust in organized religion was higher in the late 1990s than at any time since the mid-1970s, reflecting a general conservatism in cultural attitudes, although the scandals within the Catholic Church have since brought mistrust on all religious authority. Only trust in other people has steadily fallen.

“Trust,” of course, has many meanings. Take trust in government. When people say they “mistrust” the government, they may mean that they are mildly skeptical, profoundly disaffected, or on the verge of revolt. Before 9/11 the public’s trust in government was low, but in the first months afterward it soared to its highest levels since the mid-1960s. That suggests that the earlier mistrust was not a deep conviction but a casual attitude born of secure times. It is easy to mistrust what we think we don’t need.

Mistrust is not bad in itself. A polity of suckers is no better than a nation of cynics. But both mistrust and trust should be

thoughtful, not automatic. During the post-9/11 jump in trust one poll found that 80 percent of Democrats thought that Al Gore should not criticize President Bush; 39 percent of all voters and 37 percent of Democrats said in December of 2001 that it would be inappropriate for *anyone* to disagree publicly with the President’s military decisions. Avoiding debate is never a sign of robust civic culture. The argument over foreign policy and domestic security that has returned in recent months is much better than a rote profession of faith in whoever holds power.

Collective mood swings about government are probably the norm for a modern democracy, which is designed to get along well enough while most citizens focus on their private lives. We look up occasionally from our own business, and what we see then—a revolution of civil rights, a distasteful scandal, a terrible attack—can shape our attitudes for years. If there has been a systemic change, it is that scandal-hungry reporting and a tell-all culture have drawn attention to the personal limitations of public figures, encouraging us to be smug in the conviction that the appetitive Bill Clinton or the inarticulate George Bush cannot deserve our confidence, even if their shortcomings have little to do with making sound political decisions. The American oscillation between glib



cynicism and naive trust, though, is an old and basic habit.

Mistrust of business has always been driven by events, most recently the rash of corporate-accounting scandals. The unrecorded peaks and valleys from 1927 to 1931 must have outdone those of the past decade, but today the stakes may be higher. For more than a decade American business has been the world's gold standard, providing a model of successful low-regulation capitalism. For that reason we Americans have been able to rely on enormous foreign investment while saving almost none of our own money and maintaining a vast trade deficit. If the United States were perceived to have come down with a case of raging crony capitalism, investors everywhere would think about withdrawing their funds. Without foreign subsidy for American consumption, we could go into a long recession, which would also sink export manufacturers around the world.

The recent scandals raise that danger, and their genesis shows how important the difference is between intelligent trust and thoughtless trust. In 1994 the percentage of people who said they trusted the federal government most or all of the time reached by far its lowest point since 1958, when the National Election Studies—which asks questions about trust in government—began. At the same time, confidence in major companies was picking up, about to begin its strongest run in almost three decades. The following six years, full of reflexive skepticism about government and uncritical euphoria about private enterprise, produced a burst of deregulation and a wave of stock-market investment. The fashionable belief was that markets always got it right and government almost always got it wrong.

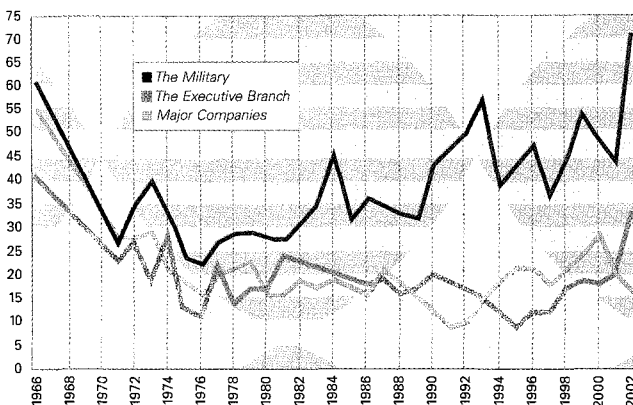
We now know what that produced: Enron, WorldCom, and the NASDAQ bubble, to name a few. The companies that were supposed to herald a changed world turned out to be old-fashioned pyramid schemes. The lesson is that if business is to deserve public trust, it must be regulated by a trustworthy government. Without that foundation, trust in business is superstition. It is bad to mistrust those who deserve trust, but worse to trust those who don't.

The important question, then, is what fosters a trustworthy government. At least part of the answer appears to be interpersonal trust—the supposition that most other people are trustworthy. Suspicious people are less likely to join associations, follow public events, get to know their neighbors, or make contact with their congresspersons. In fact, they are less likely than others to do just about anything except watch TV and flip off other drivers on the highway. That means they are not the kinds of citizens who are likely to hold government accountable, intelligently and regularly, and thus keep it trustworthy.

This is worrisome, since interpersonal trust is the one attitude that has steadily fallen since social scientists began measuring it. Moreover, it appears to be driven not so much by episodic events as by formative personal experiences. Interpersonal trust does not change much through life: the

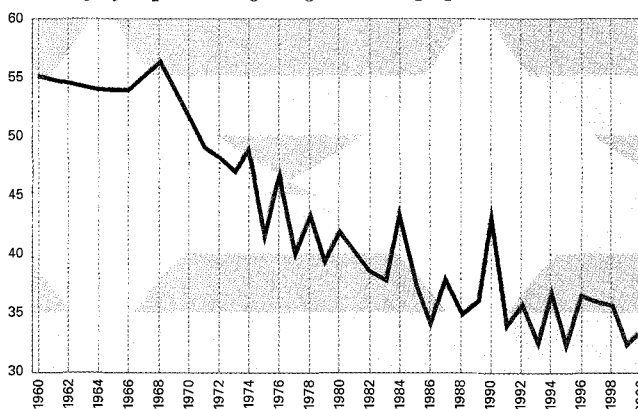
TRUST IN INSTITUTIONS EBB AND FLOWS ...

Percentage of respondents expressing "a great deal of confidence" in leaders of various institutions



... BUT INTERPERSONAL TRUST HAS STEADILY ERODED

Percentage of respondents agreeing that "most people can be trusted"



trusting young adults of the 1950s are the trusting retirees of today, and their children and grandchildren have expressed less trust in others—with a slight uptick among people just now coming of age. This suggests that the decline is related to basic changes in American life.

For instance, most older people developed their habits of trust in small towns or tightly knit urban communities. Whether or not the neighborhood shopkeeper is a good person, he can usually be trusted, because he will have to deal with you again and again. The same does not go for a telemarketer calling from India or from prison, or the summer employee at The Gap in a mall twenty miles from your home. In a wired economy many of us give credit-card numbers every day to people we will never encounter again, about whom we know nothing. How are you to tell whether the unshaven pedestrian on your suburban street is a child molester or an investment banker from the next subdivision, enjoying an afternoon walk in a bear market? When people say they don't trust others, some are describing this new situation: they may still trust most of the people they know, but they know fewer of the people they deal with.

Mobility and anonymity are related to today's great

Economist Robert Shiller wonders why we have such faith in the utter rationality of markets when we can be kinda, you know, irrational. Bad judgment, lousy information, half-baked strategies — there are times when **money brings out the worst in people.**

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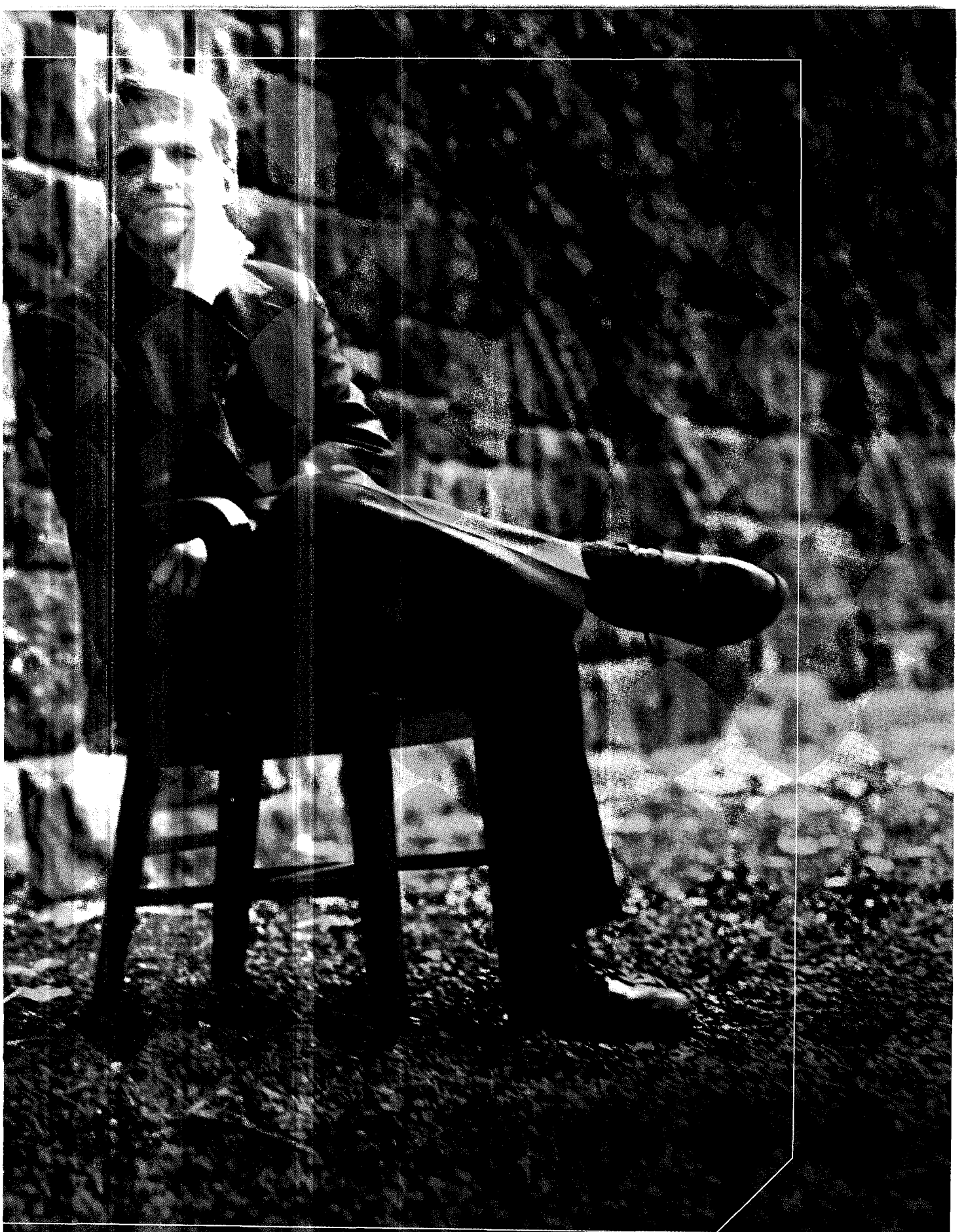
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achievements: meritocracy and racial equality. We probably can't have the good without the bad. There is plenty of trust among homogeneous elites, whether small-town businessmen or Boston Brahmins, who do their business together and exclude outsiders. There was also in-group trust in the racial solidarity of an America that within living memory publicly embraced white supremacy. Freedom and opportunity have eroded those unjust forms of community, and have at the same time made us more of a nation of strangers.

Another source of mistrust has no redeeming side: economic segregation. Expensive new suburbs and urban gentrification are only the extremes of a trend that is now several decades old: rich neighborhoods, like rich families, are getting richer, and poor neighborhoods poorer. Because the poor tend to be mistrustful, economic segregation produces untrusting communities cut off from wealthier (and generally more trusting) populations. That is not a formula for a good civic life.

When government builds or undercuts interpersonal trust, it is shaping its own future. Half of what government can do in this area is to avoid dangerous mistakes. Asking people to spy on one another spreads mistrust—as it did under the surveillance-heavy and paranoid communist regimes of East Germany and Romania. So does reinforcing pernicious inequalities, whose victims, understandably, mistrust everyone, often including one another. The other half of what government can do is more affirmative. Funding AmeriCorps and other volunteer programs will help. So will creating opportunities in schools and other institutions for civic involvement, because people involved in common projects learn to trust one another. The greatest challenge, though, is to find a way of overcoming economic segregation.

America's democratic capitalism asks civic diligence and mutual concern of people who are, reasonably enough, mostly interested in looking out for themselves in a money-making society. Naturally, it disappoints almost everyone sometimes. However, the future of interpersonal trust and its twin, civic involvement, is everyone's concern. A vivid way to imagine the alternatives is to look beyond America's borders to Norway, where 65 percent of people say they trust their fellow citizens, and to Brazil, where three percent do. Climate aside, most people would prefer the orderly, egalitarian society to the crime-racked and corrupt nation of well-protected rich and restless poor.

We know that in the 1990s, without faith in government, trust in business turned out to be groundless. The question now is, If we don't trust one another enough to keep civic culture strong, will our growing faith in government prove equally misguided? Then we could fall back only on the weak reed of our solitary selves. ▀

Jedediah Purdy is the author of For Common Things (1999) and Being America, to be published in February.

[National Unity]

THE NEW CONTINENTAL DIVIDE

Overcrowded cities on the coasts. Dying rural communities in the interior. The way to save both may be to create a post-agrarian heartland

BY MICHAEL LIND

Two of our country's most cherished dreams are at risk. One is the American dream of upward mobility. The other is the romantic dream of settling the American heartland. These two dreams cannot be separated in the information age any more than they could be in the frontier past. Indeed, for many Americans in this century moving up may mean moving inland.

Today much of the Great Plains is undergoing a catastrophic demographic collapse. Stretching 1,600 miles from central Texas to the Canadian border and 750 miles across at its widest point, and containing all or most of ten states, this region accounts for a fifth of the land area of the United States, but only four percent of the population—about 12 million people. To put this in perspective, the population of the Los Angeles region is now greater than that of the Great Plains, an area five times the size of California.

Sixty percent of the counties in the Great Plains declined in population in the past decade. In 2001, ninety-nine U.S. counties had populations in which four percent or more of residents were eighty-five or older; most of these counties were in rural areas in the Great Plains. Many heartland communities face the prospect of becoming ghost towns, as older inhabitants die and younger residents move away. Already more and more of what early Americans called "the Great American Desert" fits the nineteenth-century definition of frontier territory: an area with no more than six inhabitants per square mile.

Meanwhile, the coasts are rapidly filling up. Although coastal counties occupy only about 17 percent of the territory of the contiguous United States, they contain about 53 percent of the nation's population. By 2015 the coastal population will have increased by the equivalent of two Californias—71 million newcomers—since 1960. In the same period the Pacific Coast alone, adding more than 28 million people, will have undergone a 158 percent increase in population.

The percentage of the U.S. population living in coastal counties has remained relatively constant since the 1960s. But the increase in absolute numbers means that the coasts are getting crowded. The official population density of the United States is only seventy-six people per square mile—compared with 134 in Europe and 203 in Asia. Density on the coasts, however, is much greater (and in the interior is much less) than the average suggests. By 2010, when Cali-

ifornia has 50 million people, it will have a coastal population density of 1,050 per square mile—considerably greater than the average in Europe or Asia. The Northeast currently has twice the population density of any other U.S. region; with 654 people per square mile, it is as crowded as Germany.

The crowding is intensified by immigrants, who are concentrated in a small number of “gateway” cities and states that are generally on the coasts. Owing to a high rate of immigration, which accounts for 70 percent of U.S. population growth today, the United States is experiencing a population increase just as other democratic nations are watching their populations decline.

The future demographic pattern of the United States may be a largely empty interior surrounded by a handful of densely populated metropolitan areas: “Bosnywash,” the Boston–New York–Washington corridor; “San-San” (San Diego to San Francisco); a “Texas Triangle” defined by Dallas, Houston, and Austin–San Antonio. The suburbs of expanding cities may fuse together, whereupon a process of inexorable “densification” may begin.

As a result of coastal growth and heartland decline, a new geographic divide is appearing in American society at the beginning of the twenty-first century: not the familiar rivalry between the rugged West and the effete East, or the Yankee North and the Confederate South, but a growing divergence between the coasts and the interior. Beyond the slow death of many of America’s small towns, this divide raises a number of serious issues.

The most obvious relates to national politics, as the stark contrast in the 2000 election between densely populated “Gore country” and thinly populated “Bush country” suggests. Al Gore could fly from California to Washington, D.C., without passing over a single state in between that gave him its electoral votes. That power in Washington is only partly related to population density does not clearly benefit any region, but it does undermine the very essence of the democratic process. On the one hand, the Electoral College and the U.S. Senate exaggerate the political power of the prairie, the Great Plains, and the Mountain States. Wyoming’s senators represent about half a million people; California’s represent 34 million. Yet every state has exactly the same number of Senate votes. On the other hand, many heartland politicians raise much of their money from the wealthy in coastal enclaves, prompting questions about whether they

represent their local constituents or their distant donors.

The geographic divide is also an economic divide. During the past decade seventeen of the twenty fastest-growing counties in the United States were on the coasts, as were eighteen of the twenty counties that lead the nation in per capita income. Many CEOs and Hollywood stars seek a change of scenery at private ranches and resorts in the interior, where the descendants of once proud farming and ranching families wait on their tables or scrub their floors. As ambitious young people move out, entire regions enter an economic death spiral, characterized by an aging population, a shrinking tax base, and contracting public and private investment.

Meanwhile, inequality is growing on the coasts themselves. The 2000 census revealed a startling drop in median income in New York City, the result of depressed wages

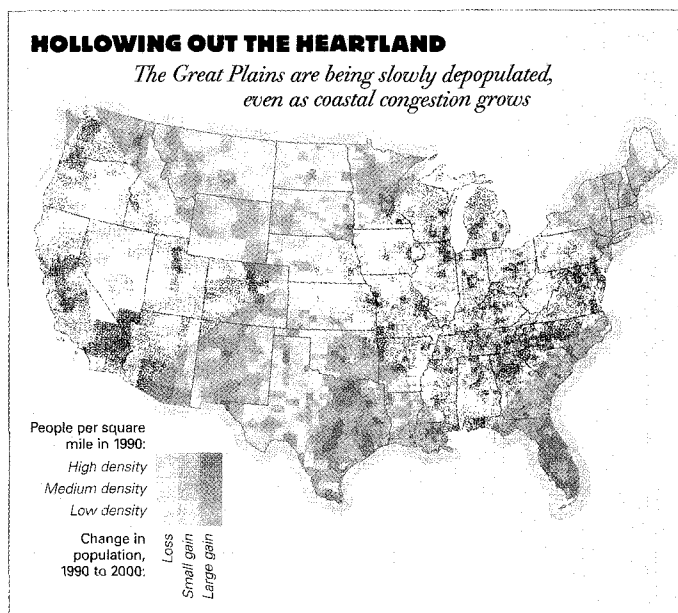
in neighborhoods in Brooklyn, the Bronx, and Queens where the immigrant population has grown the most. The census revealed a similar phenomenon in other northeastern cities and in southern California—also areas of high immigration. Even if wages in densely populated cities and states were not being driven down by mass immigration, crowding would inevitably raise both real-estate prices and the cost of living—to the detri-

ment of working-class Americans and the poor.

The nightmarish result might be an America in which the same wealthy elite lords it over both a largely nonwhite proletariat of maids, nannies, gardeners, and janitors in the coastal cities and over a mostly white working class of janitors, dude-ranch employees, and tourist-trap workers in the interior. This, in turn, might produce a hardening economic and racial hierarchy or even a class war. Whatever the outcome, the American dream of a middle-class society might be threatened.

The heartland needs people—and many Americans on the coasts need affordable housing. Why not bring them together?

Imagine a federal program that would help poor and working-class Americans to move not from crowded cities to suburbs in the same general area but from crowded states to low-density states where homes are cheaper and the general cost of living is lower. Compare the proportion of homes that a median-income family can afford in Kansas City (82.1 percent) with the number in Boston (51.3 percent), New



York City (42.1 percent), Los Angeles (40.2 percent), and San Francisco (10.3 percent). The people who moved would not be the only ones to benefit financially. If the coastal areas did not replace those lost workers with migrants from elsewhere in the country or the world, wages there might rise as the labor market grew tight; and financial barriers to home ownership would decline even in big coastal cities.

Today only about six percent of America's land is residential (urban, suburban, and rural). About 20 percent is farmland, another 25 percent is rangeland, and the rest is wilderness and woodland. The United States grows far more food today than it did in 1954—on about three quarters the acreage. Since 1950, even as agricultural production has increased by more than 100 percent, land has been taken out of agriculture eight times as fast as it has been consumed by suburban development. Much of that abandoned farmland has gone back to forest, particularly in the Northeast. In the twenty-first century most of the land that is liberated from unnecessary agriculture can continue to be restored to wilderness—prairie, forest, or desert—even if a significant portion is reserved for new, low-density housing for migrants from the crowded coastal states.

The federal government subsidizes many farms and ranches that should have been shut down long ago. At best, farm subsidies provide life support for comatose communities. The government is planning to spend at least \$171 billion on direct farm subsidies alone over the coming decade. In much of the continental interior this money would be better used to promote a combination of service and manufacturing industries, as part of an ambitious economic-development program for the region.

Washington should also phase out the roughly \$2 billion in annual irrigation subsidies to western agribusinesses—of which almost half is used for surplus crops. Subsidized irrigation is rapidly depleting the High Plains aquifer under Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Kansas, Colorado, South Dakota, Wyoming, and Nebraska, which now provides about 30 percent of the groundwater used in the United States. The experiment with agriculture in the semi-arid Great Plains from the late nineteenth century onward was a mistake; it produced the Dust Bowl during the Depression and today's regional demographic decline. Cutting off such subsidies would not only end the western water wars but also drive agriculture eastward to states like Illinois and Iowa, where water is abundant and renewable. Within those states market pricing for water would encourage crop diversification and technological innovation in agriculture. Residential and industrial use, not agricultural use, should be the priority of water policy in the Great Plains and the desert and Mountain West, including major portions of California and Texas. And diverting water from agriculture to industry has the potential to generate far more jobs: according to the U.S. Geological Survey, for example, the same amount of water that supports a sixty-acre alfalfa farm with only two workers

could support a semiconductor factory with 2,000 workers.

The money saved by reducing direct and indirect agricultural subsidies could help to pay for a new high-tech infrastructure in the American heartland. All too many rural areas lack, for example, high-speed broadband access. The federal government, which subsidized the railroad in the nineteenth century and the electric-power grid and interstate highways in the twentieth, needs to build a transcontinental infrastructure once again. A hydrogen-based transportation system might be constructed from nothing in many rural areas, which would be spared the transition costs necessary in developed regions. And the government could encourage an air-taxi system, such as James Fallows has proposed in this magazine (see "Freedom of the Skies," June 2001 *Atlantic*), in which thousands of small regional airports would supplement our major hubs, potentially turning dying small towns into new centers of commerce and culture. An "interstate-skyway system" might be to America in the twenty-first century what the interstate-highway system was in the twentieth.

Rural Kansas will never be as scenic as San Francisco, or as crowded with libraries as Boston. But a post-agrarian heartland would be a nice place to live for the children and grandchildren of many of today's struggling coastal families. Fortunately, most jobs in the service economy can be performed anywhere. By 1997, 39 percent of Great Plains farm owners were already designating their main job as "other," rather than "farmer," on their tax returns. By the middle of the twenty-first century the archetypal Plains dweller might be a telecommuting professional.

Thomas Jefferson's idea that population dispersal would promote economic and social equality was shared by Abraham Lincoln, who signed the Homestead Act to provide western land to settlers from the East, and by Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who in 1925 expressed admiration for Canada's policy of seeking "distribution of [its] immigrants throughout every portion of Canada." By means of rural electrification, interstate-highway construction, tax benefits for homeowners, and the nationwide distribution of military plants and government contracts, FDR and his successors made it possible for immigrant slum dwellers and poor tenant farmers to become today's home-owning suburban majority.

In a second inland movement, wired professionals and well-paid service workers might make new lives in wide-open spaces that are slowly reverting from monotonous expanses of wheat and corn to wilderness. The first wave of heartland settlement was in the long-term perspective a failure, with consequences that are evident today. The high-tech pioneers of the twenty-first century, unlike their agrarian predecessors, may be able to reconcile the myth of the heartland with the American dream. ▀

Michael Lind, a senior fellow at the New America Foundation, is the author of Made in Texas: George W. Bush and the Southern Takeover of American Politics (2002).

THE OVERTREATED AMERICAN

One of our biggest health-care problems is that there's just too much health care. Cutting down on the excess could save enough to cover everyone who is now uninsured

BY SHANNON BROWNLEE

Americans enjoy the most sophisticated medical care that money can buy—and one of the most vexing health-care-delivery systems. We spend about \$1.2 trillion each year, two to four times per capita what other developed nations spend, yet we can't find a way to provide health insurance for 41 million citizens. After a brief respite in the 1990s when HMOs held down expenses by squeezing profits from doctors and hospitals, medical costs are once again soaring by 10 to 12 percent a year. Yet reforms proposed by Congress and the White House are only nibbling around the edges of the problem.

Such political timidity is understandable, given the experience of would-be reformers of the past. Any attempt to expand coverage for the uninsured while holding down costs inevitably raises fear in the minds of voters that the only way to accomplish these seemingly opposing goals is by restricting access to expensive, life-saving medical treatment. Sure, we feel bad about the 18,000 or so of our fellow citizens who die prematurely each year because they lack health insurance, and about the seniors who are forced to choose between buying food and buying medicine. But Americans want nothing to do with a system like England's, which, for example, is reluctant to provide dialysis to the elderly, and most of us who are now covered by either Medicare or private insurance have little stomach for health-care reform that contains even a whiff of rationing.

Behind this fear lies an implicit assumption that more health care means better health. But what if that assumption is wrong? In fact, what if more medicine can sometimes be bad not just for our pocketbooks but also for our health?

An increasing body of evidence points to precisely that conclusion. "There is a certain level of care that helps you live as long and as well as possible," says John Wennberg, the director of the Center for Evaluative Clinical Sciences at

Dartmouth Medical School. "Then there's excess care, which not only doesn't help you live longer but may shorten your life or make it worse. Many Americans are getting excess care." According to the center, 20 to 30 percent of health-care spending goes for procedures, office visits, drugs, hospitalization, and treatments that do absolutely nothing to improve the quality or increase the length of our lives. At the same time, the type of treatment that offers clear benefits is not reaching many Americans, even those who are insured.

That's a sobering thought, but it opens the possibility of a new way to look at the conundrum of health-care reform. Lawmakers, insurers, and the health-care industry might be able to save money if they were to concentrate on improving the quality of medicine rather than on controlling costs. Better health care will of course mean more medicine for some Americans, particularly the uninsured; but for many of us it will mean less medicine.

Support for this idea can be found in *The Dartmouth Atlas of Health Care*, a compendium of statistics and patterns of medical spending in 306 regions of the country. The atlas is generated by a group of nearly two dozen doctors, epidemiologists, and health-care economists, using data from Medicare, large private insurers, and a variety of other sources. Wennberg is the group's leader and the patron saint of the idea that more medicine does not necessarily mean better health—a view that has not exactly endeared him to the medical establishment over the years. These days, however, his ideas are bolstered by the Institute of Medicine and other independent researchers, and by new results coming from his Dartmouth research

team, which is showing precisely how the nation misspends its health-care dollars.

Take the regions surrounding Miami and Minneapolis, which represent the high and low ends, respectively, of Medicare spending. A sixty-five-year-old in Miami will typically account for \$50,000 more in Medicare expenses over the rest of his life than a sixty-five-year-old in Minneapolis. During the last six months of life, a period that usually accounts for more than 20 percent of a patient's total Medicare expenditures, a Miamian spends, on average, twice as many days in the hospital as his counterpart in Minneapolis, and is twice as likely to see the inside of an intensive-care unit.

This type of regional variation would make perfect sense if regions where citizens were sickest were the ones that used the most medical services. After all, it's only fair that we



should spend more and do more in places where people need more medical attention. But, as Wennberg and his colleagues Elliott Fisher and Jonathan Skinner point out in a recent paper, "Geography and the Debate Over Medicare Reform," which appeared online in the journal *Health Affairs*, rates of underlying illness do not account for the differences in spending among regions. If they did, the region around Provo, Utah, one of the healthiest in the country, would get 14 percent fewer Medicare dollars than the national average, because its citizens are less likely to smoke, drink, or suffer from strokes, heart attacks, and other ailments. Instead it receives seven percent more than the national average. In contrast, elderly people in the region around Richmond, Virginia, tend to be sicker than the average American, and should be receiving 11 percent more—rather than 21 percent less—than the national average. Nor are regional differences explained by variations in the cost of care. Provo doctors are not, for example, charging significantly more for office visits or lumpectomies than doctors in Richmond, and their patients aren't getting costlier artificial hips.

Rather, much of the variation among regions—about 41 percent of it, by the most recent estimate—is driven by hospital resources and numbers of doctors. In other words, it is the supply of medical services rather than the demand for them that determines the amount of care delivered. Where neonatal intensive-care units are more abundant, more babies spend more days in the NICU. Where there are more MRI machines, people get more diagnostic tests; where there are more specialty practices, people see more specialists. It's probably safe to assume that many people are gravely ill during the last six months of their lives no matter where they live; but Medicare beneficiaries see, on average, twenty-five specialists in a year in Miami versus two in Mason City, Iowa, largely because Miami is home to a lot more specialists.

It would be one thing if all this lavish medical attention were helping people in high-cost regions like Miami to live longer or better. But that doesn't appear to be the case. Recent studies are beginning to show that excess spending in high-cost regions does not buy citizens better health. Medicare patients visit doctors more frequently in high-cost regions, to be sure, but they are no more likely than citizens in low-cost regions to receive preventive care such as flu shots or careful monitoring of their diabetes, and they don't

live any longer. In fact, their lives may be slightly shorter. The most likely explanation for the increased mortality seen in high-cost regions is that elderly people who live there spend more time in hospitals than do citizens in low-cost regions, Wennberg says, "and we know that hospitals are risky places." Patients who are hospitalized run the risk of suffering from medical errors or drug interactions, receiving the wrong drug, getting an infection, or being subjected to diagnostic testing that leads to unnecessary treatment.

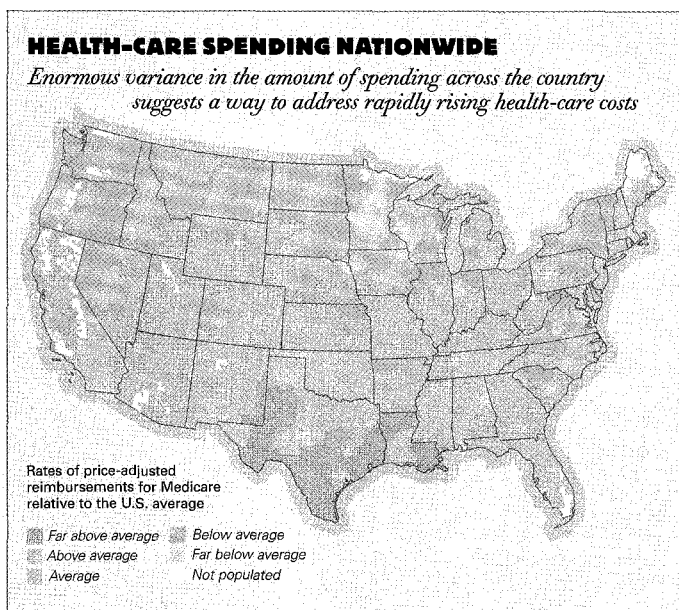
An obvious way we might cut excess medical care is to change the way we pay hospitals and doctors. "Medicine is the only industry where high quality is reimbursed no better than low quality," says David Cutler, a health economist at Harvard. "The reason we do all the wasteful stuff is that we pay for what's done, not what's accomplished." Although that's clearly the case, figuring out the right incentives for

health-care providers is by no means easy. Let's say that Medicare decided to use low-cost regions as a benchmark and told providers in the rest of the country that their compensation would be capped at some level not far above the benchmark. Some doctors in high-cost regions would undoubtedly be encouraged to practice more conservatively, but many others would maintain their incomes by either dropping Medicare patients altogether or giving them

even more hysterectomies and CT scans they don't need (thus compensating for lower fees by simply performing a greater number of procedures).

Even if policymakers come up with the right financial incentives, restructuring compensation will constitute only one small component of the reform that's needed to turn medicine into an efficient, effective industry. Think of it this way: at 13 to 14 percent of GDP, health care is the nation's largest single industry, and probably its most complex. Transforming this sprawling behemoth is going to involve a lot more upheaval than, say, the shift that took place in the auto industry when companies adopted the assembly line, or the shake-up that Hollywood and the music industry now face with the advent of Web entertainment.

Step No. 1 toward improving the quality of health care is reducing what the Dartmouth group calls "supply-sensitive" care—the excess procedures, hospital admissions, and doctor visits that are driven by the supply of doctors and hospital resources rather than by need. Organizations



such as the American Medical Association and Kaiser Permanente will need to set standards for more-conservative practices, and for measuring patient outcomes. Benchmarks are also needed to ensure that doctors deliver more “evidence-based” medicine: procedures and practices whose benefits are proven. Three recent studies, conducted by the Institute of Medicine, the Rand Corporation, and the President’s Advisory Commission on Consumer Protection and Quality in the Health Care Industry, report widespread underuse of evidence-based treatment, such as balloon angioplasty to open blocked arteries in heart-attack victims, even among citizens with gold-plated health insurance.

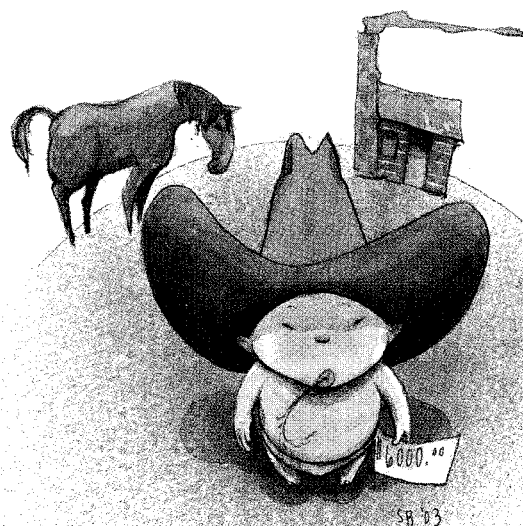
Probably the hardest part of reforming health care will be persuading policymakers and politicians that improving the quality of care can also save money. The Medical Quality Improvement Act, introduced last July by Vermont Senator James Jeffords, is a step in the right direction. It would call on several medical centers around the country to model high-quality medicine that also reins in costs.

But evidence already exists that improving quality can hold down costs. Franklin Health, a company based in Upper Saddle River, New Jersey, manages so-called “complex cases” for private insurers. Complex cases are the sickest of the sick, patients with multiple or terminal illnesses, who are also the most costly to treat. They typically make up only one or two percent of the average patient population while accounting for 30 percent of costs. Franklin employs a battalion of nurses, who make home visits and spend hours on the phone, sometimes every day, to help patients control pain and other symptoms and stay out of the hospital. For this low-tech but intensive service the company charges insurers an average of \$6,000 to \$8,000 per patient—but it saves them \$14,000 to \$18,000 per patient in medical bills.

How much money is at stake? If spending in high-cost regions could somehow be brought in line with spending in low-cost regions, Medicare alone could save on the order of 29 percent, or \$59 billion a year—enough to keep the Medicare system afloat for an additional ten years, or to fund a generous prescription-drug benefit for seniors. And there’s no reason to believe that doctors and hospitals behave any differently toward their non-Medicare patients. That means the system as a whole is wasting about \$400 billion a year—more than enough to cover the needs of the 41 million uninsured citizens.

The last attempt at reforming the U.S. health-care system failed in large measure because of fears of rationing. Reform was viewed as an effort to cut costs, not to improve health, and voters believed, rightly or wrongly, that they would end up being denied the benefits of modern medicine. Future efforts at reform are going to have to persuade Americans and their doctors that sometimes less care is better. ▀

Shannon Brownlee, a senior fellow at the New America Foundation, was formerly a senior writer for Discover and U.S. News & World Report. Her work has appeared frequently in The New Republic, The Washington Post, and other publications.



[Wealth Inequality]

THE \$6,000 SOLUTION

The United States is more unequal than at any other time since the dawn of the New Deal—indeed, it’s the most unequal society in the advanced democratic world. Here’s how to fix that

BY RAY BOSHARA

Throughout our history, periods of unbounded market exuberance, like the one we recently experienced, have been followed by periods of far-reaching social and economic reform. The Gilded Age of the late nineteenth century gave way to the Populist and Progressive reforms of the early twentieth century, the Roaring Twenties to the New Deal, and the Eisenhower-Kennedy Nifty-Fifty bull market to the Great Society and the War on Poverty. From this cycle of great wealth creation (and abuse) followed by great reform has emerged a social contract that has smoothed out the rougher edges of American capitalism while making us a more prosperous society.

Like the Gilded Age and the Roaring Twenties, the Roaring Nineties (which had its roots in the early 1980s) brought worrying new levels of inequality. Those who owned stock, homes, and other assets enjoyed substantial gains each year—and those with privileged access to initial public offerings often doubled their money in a day. Meanwhile, global competition and the ruthless restructuring of the economy put a lid on wages and benefits for the great majority of Americans, especially those without college degrees. While the rich monitored the gains on their monthly brokerage statements, Americans without financial assets struggled each month to pay the interest on their credit-card bills.

By the close of the 1990s the United States had become more unequal than at any other time since the dawn of the

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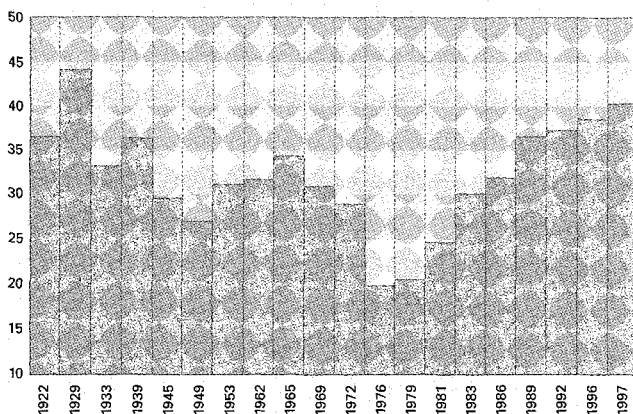
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New Deal—indeed, it was the most unequal society in the advanced democratic world. The top 20 percent of households earned 56 percent of the nation's income and commanded an astonishing 83 percent of the nation's wealth. Even more striking, the top one percent earned about 17 percent of national income and owned 38 percent of national wealth. In nearly two decades the number of millionaires had doubled, to 4.8 million, and the number of "deca-millionaires"—those worth at least \$10 million—had more than tripled, from 66,500 to 239,400.

In contrast, the bottom 40 percent of Americans earned

SHARE OF WEALTH HELD BY THE RICHEST ONE PERCENT OF POPULATION

The concentration of wealth in the U.S. is approaching historic levels



just 10 percent of the nation's income and owned less than one percent of the nation's wealth. The bottom 60 percent did only marginally better, accounting for about 23 percent of income and less than five percent of wealth. The racial gaps are even more disheartening. The typical African-American household had fifty-four cents of income and twelve cents of wealth for every corresponding dollar in the typical white American household. Hispanics had sixty-two cents of income and four cents of wealth.

The wealth gap dwarfs the more oft noted income gap not only in size but also in significance, for several reasons. First, ownership of assets—a home, land, a business, savings and investments—provides the kind of security that permits planning for the future and the future of one's children. Second, although a job and an income are obviously important, they cannot be bequeathed to future generations, whereas wealth—and the status and opportunities it confers—can be. Finally, with wealth comes political influence. Many politicians spend more time raising money from the wealthy than they do speaking with their own constituents. As Kevin Phillips, the author of *Wealth and Democracy* (2002), recently observed, the intense concentration of the nation's wealth in a small sliver of society has raised the specter of plutocracy.

One way the rich use their influence, of course, is to

protect and increase their wealth. But the political privileges enjoyed by the rich over the past decade cannot alone explain the size of the wealth gap. Clean up all the corruption on Wall Street and K Street, and we would still have huge inequalities of wealth. Deeper forces are at work, among them the introduction of labor-saving technologies that have benefited the owners of capital at the expense of workers; the downward pressure that globalization has exerted on wages; and changes that have made the tax code less progressive and more friendly to the better-off.

There is also the fact that wealth, like debt, is self-replicating. Compound interest turns wealth into more wealth and debt into more debt. Other things being equal, those with interest-bearing savings accounts will end up richer after a year, and those who must pay interest on credit-card or consumer household debt will end up poorer. Thus even a neutral government policy toward wealth and asset building will end up exacerbating the wealth gap. But over the past several decades policy has hardly been neutral. The federal government currently has two distinct policies: asset-building incentives for better-off Americans (in the form of more than \$300 billion in tax benefits each year for such things as home ownership, business development, college education, and retirement saving)—and income support for the rest.

Tax breaks that encourage asset building are smart policy—except that more than 90 percent of the benefits of the two largest programs (which support home ownership and retirement saving) go to the wealthiest 55 percent of taxpayers. This enormously regressive policy thus excludes people who don't earn enough to enjoy the benefits built into the tax code. In addition, many poorer Americans face limits on the assets they can own if they want to continue receiving necessary food, health, and other income-support assistance.

If asset-building policies are good for better-off Americans, shouldn't such policies be good for *all* Americans? Actually, broad-based asset-building programs have a long and successful history in America. The Homestead Act of 1862, for example, offered 160 acres of land to every American—rich or poor—who was willing to occupy and cultivate it for five years. And the GI Bill of 1944 helped millions of Americans get a college education or buy a first home. These programs greatly equalized the distribution of wealth in America—not by punishing the rich but by expanding opportunities and the ownership of assets.

In the effort to shrink the huge wealth gap that has developed over the past decade or two, the first step is straightforward: we should extend the same opportunities that better-off Americans now have to everyone else, through refundable tax credits and matching deposits to encourage college education, home ownership, business ownership, and retirement saving.

CHART DATA SOURCE: KEVIN PHILLIPS, *WEALTH AND DEMOCRACY* (2002)

But the next step has to be bolder: a Homestead Act for the twenty-first century. Here's how it might work. Every one of the four million babies born in America each year would receive an endowment of \$6,000 in an American Stakeholder Account. If invested in a relatively safe portfolio that yielded a seven percent annual return, this sum would grow to more than \$20,000 by the time the child graduated from high school, and to \$45,000 by the time he or she reached thirty (assuming that the account had not yet been used). Funds in the American Stakeholder Account would be restricted to such asset-building uses as paying for the cost of higher education or vocational training, buying a first home, starting a small business, making investments, and, eventually, creating a nest egg for retirement. Withdrawals would of course decrease the account; work and saving would build it back up. Family members and others could also add money to the account.

Although the program would be universal, giving every American child a tool to help meet his or her lifelong asset needs, it would especially benefit the 26 percent of white children, the 52 percent of black children, and the 54 percent of Hispanic children who start life in households without any resources whatsoever for investment. For these children and others, an asset stake would provide choice, a ticket to the middle class, and, most important, hope.

Prime Minister Tony Blair has proposed a variation on this idea in England, and it could be done in the United States for only about \$24 billion a year—a very small amount by the standards of federal programs, and only about a sixth of what the government gives in tax breaks to corporations every year. The American Stakeholder Act, like the Homestead Act and the GI Bill before it, would be a smart investment in our nation's future. Nearly a quarter of all American adults today have a legacy of asset ownership that can be directly linked to the Homestead Act. The GI Bill has generated returns to our country of up to \$12.50 for every dollar invested. If asset-building were started at birth, even greater returns could be expected from the American Stakeholder Act. Moreover, research indicates that asset ownership increases educational attainment, civic involvement, health quality, and life satisfaction, while decreasing marital breakup. And assets, unlike public assistance, can be passed from one generation to the next.

Americans readily tolerate inequality of *outcomes*, accepting that it's a necessary by-product of how we reward the hard work, initiative, and creativity that underpin our much envied economy. But we should not accept inequality of *opportunity*. Expanding the ownership of assets through a program of American Stakeholder Accounts would help to ensure that wealth inequality in one generation does not become magnified into gross inequality of opportunity in the next. ▀

Ray Boshara is the director of the Asset Building Program at the New America Foundation.

[Race Relations]

MONGREL AMERICA

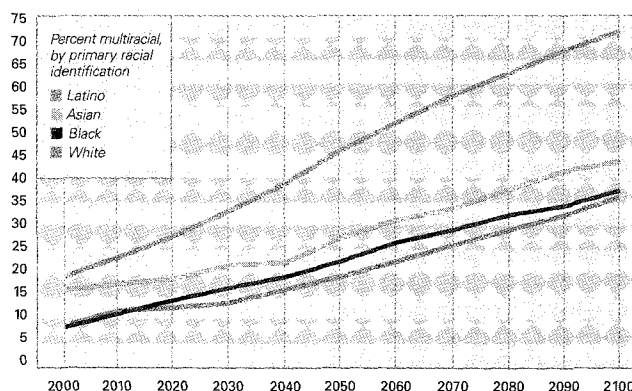
The most important long-term social fact in America may be the rising rates of intermarriage among members of ethnic and racial groups. A glimpse into our mestizo future

BY GREGORY RODRIGUEZ

Are racial categories still an important—or even a valid—tool of government policy? In recent years the debate in America has been between those who think that race is paramount and those who think it is increasingly irrelevant, and in the next election cycle this debate will surely intensify around a California ballot initiative that would all but prohibit the state from asking its citizens what their racial backgrounds are. But the ensuing polemics

PROJECTED MULTIRACIAL POPULATION, 2000-2100

Led by Latinos, Americans are intermarrying and producing mixed-race children at a rapid rate



will only obscure the more fundamental question: What, when each generation is more racially and ethnically mixed than its predecessor, does race even mean anymore? If your mother is Asian and your father is African-American, what, racially speaking, are you? (And if your spouse is half Mexican and half Russian Jewish, what are your children?)

Five decades after the end of legal segregation, and only thirty-six years after the Supreme Court struck down anti-miscegenation laws, young African-Americans are considerably more likely than their elders to claim mixed heritage. A study by the Population Research Center, in Portland, Oregon, projects that the black intermarriage rate will climb dramatically in this century, to a point at which 37 percent of African-Americans will claim mixed ancestry by 2100. By then more than 40 percent of Asian-Americans will be mixed. Most remarkable, however, by century's end the number of Latinos claiming mixed ancestry will be more than two times the number claiming a single background.

Not surprisingly, intermarriage rates for all groups are highest in the states that serve as immigration gateways. By 1990 Los Angeles County had an intermarriage rate five times the national average. Latinos and Asians, the groups that have made up three quarters of immigrants over the past forty years, have helped to create a climate in which ethnic or racial intermarriage is more accepted today than ever before. Nationally, whereas only eight percent of foreign-born Latinos marry non-Latinos, 32 percent of second-generation and 57 percent of third-generation Latinos marry outside their ethnic group. Similarly, whereas only 13 percent of foreign-born Asians marry non-Asians, 34 percent of second-generation and 54 percent of third-generation Asian-Americans do.

Meanwhile, as everyone knows, Latinos are now the largest minority group in the nation. Two thirds of Latinos, in turn, are of Mexican heritage. This is significant in itself, because their sheer numbers have helped Mexican-Americans do more than any other group to alter the country's old racial thinking. For instance, Texas and California, where Mexican-Americans are the largest minority, were the first two states to abolish affirmative action: when the collective "minority" populations in those states began to outnumber whites, the racial balance that had made affirmative action politically viable was subverted.

Many Mexican-Americans now live in cities or regions where they are a majority, changing the very idea of what it means to be a member of a "minority" group. Because of such demographic changes, a number of the policies designed to integrate non-whites into the mainstream—affirmative action in college admissions, racial set-asides in government contracting—have been rendered more complicated or even counterproductive in recent years. In California cities where whites have become a minority, it is no longer clear what "diversity" means or what the goals of integration policies should be. The selective magnet-school program of the Los Angeles Unified School District, for example, was originally developed as an alternative to forced busing—a way to integrate ethnic-minority students by encouraging them to look beyond their neighborhoods. Today, however, the school district is 71 percent Latino, and Latinos' majority status actually puts them at a disadvantage when applying to magnet schools.

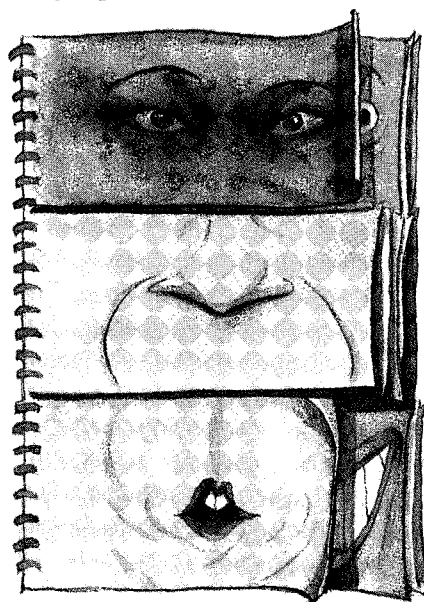
But it is not merely their growing numbers (they will soon be the majority in both California and Texas, and they are already the single largest contemporary immigrant group nationwide) that make Mexican-Americans a leading indicator of the country's racial future; rather, it's what they represent.

They have always been a complicating element in the American racial system, which depends on an oversimplified classification scheme. Under the pre-civil-rights formulation, for example, if you had "one drop" of African blood, you were fully black. The scheme couldn't accommodate people who were part one thing and part another. Mexicans, who are a product of intermingling—both cultural and genetic—between the Spanish and the many indigenous peoples of North and Central America, have a history of tolerating and even reveling in such ambiguity. Since the conquest of Mexico, in the sixteenth century, they have practiced *mestizaje*—racial and cultural synthesis—both in their own country and as they came north. Unlike the English-speaking settlers of the western frontier, the Spaniards were willing everywhere they went to allow racial and cultural mixing to blur the lines between themselves and the natives. The fact that Latin America is far more heavily populated by people of mixed ancestry than Anglo America is the clearest sign of the difference between the two outlooks on race.

Nativists once deplored the Mexican tendency toward hybridity. In the mid nineteenth century, at the time of the conquest of the Southwest, Secretary of State James Buchanan feared granting citizenship to a "mongrel race." And in the late 1920s Representative John C. Box, of Texas, warned his colleagues on the House Immigration and Naturalization Committee that the continued influx of Mexican immigrants could lead to the "distressing process of mongrelization" in America. He argued that because Mexicans were the products of mixing, they harbored a relaxed attitude toward interracial unions and were likely to mingle freely with other races in the United States.

Box was right. The typical cultural isolation of immigrants notwithstanding, those immigrants' children and grandchildren are strongly oriented toward the American melting pot. Today two thirds of multiracial and multiethnic births in California involve a Latino parent. *Mexicanidad*, or "Mexicanness," is becoming the catalyst for a new American cultural synthesis.

In the same way that the rise in the number of multiracial Americans muddles U.S. racial statistics, the growth of the Mexican-American mestizo population has begun to challenge the Anglo-American binary view of race. In the 1920 census Mexicans were counted as whites. Ten years later they were reassigned to a separate Mexican "racial" category. In 1940 they were officially reclassified as white. Today almost half the Latinos in California, which is home to a third of the nation's Latinos (most of them of Mexican descent), check "other" as their race. In the first half of the



twentieth century Mexican-American advocates fought hard for the privileges that came with being white in America. But since the 1960s activists have sought to reap the benefits of being nonwhite minorities. Having spent so long trying to fit into one side or the other of the binary system, Mexican-Americans have become numerous and confident enough to simply claim their brownness—their mixture. This is a harbinger of America's future.

The original melting-pot concept was incomplete: it applied only to white ethnics (Irish, Italians, Poles, and so forth), not to blacks and other nonwhites. Israel Zangwill, the playwright whose 1908 drama *The Melting Pot* popularized the concept, even wrote that whites were justified in avoiding intermarriage with blacks. In fact, multiculturalism—the ideology that promotes the permanent coexistence of separate but equal cultures in one place—can be seen as a by-product of America's exclusion of African-Americans from the melting pot; those whom assimilation rejected came to reject assimilation. Although the multicultural movement has always encompassed other groups, blacks gave it its moral impetus.

But the immigrants of recent decades are helping to forge a new American identity, something more complex than either a melting pot or a confederation of separate but equal groups. And this identity is emerging not as a result of politics or any specific public policies but because of powerful underlying cultural forces. To be sure, the civil-rights movement was instrumental in the initial assault on racial barriers. And immigration policies since 1965 have tended to favor those immigrant groups—Asians and Latinos—who are most open to intermarriage. But in recent years the government's major contribution to the country's growing multiracialism has been—as it should continue to be—a retreat from dictating limits on interracial intimacy and from exalting (through such policies as racial set-asides and affirmative action) race as the most important American category of being. As a result, Americans cross racial lines more often than ever before in choosing whom to sleep with, marry, or raise children with.

Unlike the advances of the civil-rights movement, the future of racial identity in America is unlikely to be determined by politics or the courts or public policy. Indeed, at this point perhaps the best thing the government can do is to acknowledge changes in the meaning of race in America and then get out of the way. The Census Bureau's decision to allow Americans to check more than one box in the "race" section of the 2000 Census was an important step in this direction. No longer forced to choose a single racial identity, Americans are now free to identify themselves as mestizos—and with this newfound freedom we may begin to endow racial issues with the complexity and nuance they deserve. ■

Gregory Rodriguez is a senior fellow at the New America Foundation and a contributing editor of the Los Angeles Times Opinion section.

[Crime]

CATCH AND RELEASE

The inevitable consequence of America's high incarceration rate is a high prison-release rate—and the prisoners getting out are often more violent or antisocial than they were before. It's time to rethink—and rebuild—rehabilitation and parole

BY MARGARET TALBOT

Every day in America some 1,600 people will leave state and federal prisons. Most will start their journey with "gate money" (from \$20 to \$200), a one-way bus ticket, and little else. Many will be drug abusers who received no treatment for their addiction while on the inside, sex offenders who got no counseling, and illiterate high school dropouts who took no classes and acquired no job skills. A lot of them will be sick: rates of HIV, tuberculosis, and hepatitis C are all considerably higher among prisoners than in the general population. Many of them will be obdurate "churners," who have already been reincarcerated for a new crime or a parole violation and are now being let out again. Only about 13 percent will have participated in any kind of pre-release program to prepare them for life outside. Nearly a quarter of them will be sent home unconditionally and with no supervision. And two thirds (up from one half in 1984), according to the Urban Institute, will return to just a few metropolitan areas in their states, where they will be further concentrated in struggling neighborhoods that can ill afford to accommodate them.

It's not quite fair to say that no one thought about these sorts of things when the rage for incarceration began to dominate American crime policy, in the early 1980s, but it's not far from the truth either. Almost all prisoners get out eventually. What happens when they do, however, is not a topic that held the interest of the legislators who passed mandatory-sentencing laws, abolished parole boards, and eliminated funding for prisoner education. As a result, prison sentences have grown longer while prisons have become places where nothing is done to reprogram criminals for the life outside to which 95 percent of them will return. "Our contemporary prisons basically replicate the social order that produced the offenders to begin with," says Mark A. R. Kleiman, a professor of public policy at the University of California at Los Angeles. "Their signal qualities are violence, idleness, and noise."

Until the early 1980s prison education and rehabilitation programs were deeply embedded in American corrections. But over the past twenty years—a period in which the U.S. prison population has increased fourfold—vocational and educational programs for prisoners have dwindled steadily.

Funding once earmarked for such programs has gone instead toward constructing new facilities and providing health care for an older and sicker inmate population.

Prison programs lost their funding partly in response to research in the 1970s that implied they had scant success in cutting recidivism. But new studies suggest that certain kinds of programs do work to increase employment and reduce criminality. Adult literacy and GED classes, vocational training with a realistic eye to the job market, cognitive therapy for sex offenders, and drug-abuse counseling that continues after release have all shown modest but cost-effective success. A recent study sponsored by the Virginia Department of Correctional Education, in which ex-inmates were tracked for fifteen years, found that recidivism among those who had pursued an education while in prison was 59 percent lower. More-comprehensive studies on prison educational programs have shown that reincarceration is 20 percent less frequent for participants. Even allowing for the inevitable selection bias (those who enroll in optional prison programs are more motivated to succeed in the first place), these are pretty encouraging results. "It's an ironic story," says Todd Clear, a professor at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice, in New York, "in that just as the evidence for programs that reduce recidivism was growing, the willingness and capacity to fund them shrank."



Meanwhile, the culture of parole has changed too. Resources for supervising parolees have not kept pace with the growing numbers of them, so case-loads are bigger. In the 1970s the average parole officer oversaw forty-five ex-offenders, according to the Urban Institute, whereas today the number is about seventy. One consequence has been an emphasis on surveillance rather than more time-consuming personal relationships between officers and parolees, which has meant that many more parolees are charged with technical violations. Indeed, parole violators make up a rapidly growing class of prisoners: in 1980 they accounted for 18 percent of admissions; today they account for a third, and most of them have been sent back on technical grounds. But many technical violations—leaving a designated area, not showing up for a meeting with the parole officer—are not crimes, and it's not at all clear that improving the capacity to detect technical violations or locking up more parole violators enhances public safety. What we can say is that this approach is expensive: California, which sends more parole violators back to prison than any other state, spends some \$900 million a

year to house them, for average stays of about five months.

The larger problem, though, is that in many places we have replaced discretionary parole, in which parole boards decide when a prisoner is ready for conditional release, with a regime that eliminates much of the discretion not only from parole but also from sentencing. In so doing we have removed some powerful incentives for prisoners to become the sort of people we would want to send home again. Parole boards came under attack in the 1970s: the right criticized them for being too lenient, the left for being too hard on minorities, and good-government types for being too beholden to the narrow political interests of the governors who appointed them. In 1977 parole-board decisions still accounted for 88 percent of all prisoner releases; by 2000 they accounted for only 24 percent.

In some ways this was an improvement: it removed an element of arbitrariness from the parole process. But the social cost was high. As Joan Petersilia, a criminologist at the University of California at Irvine, explains in a forthcoming book, *When Prisoners Come Home*,

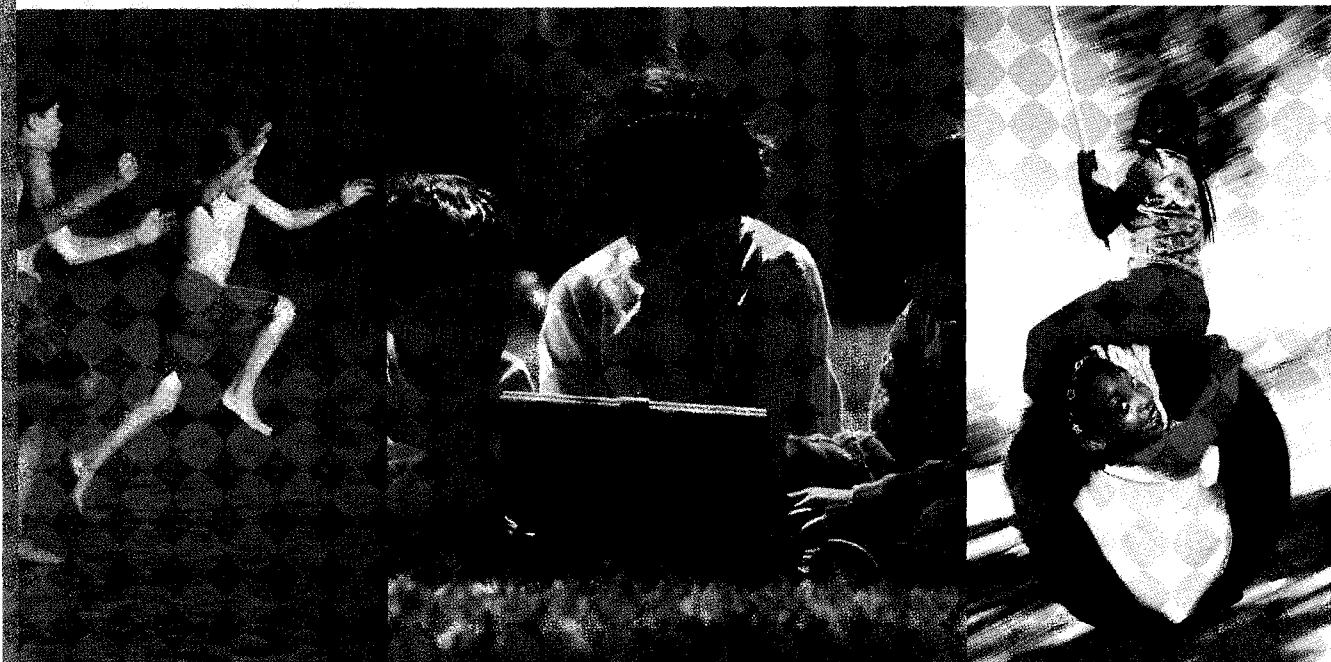
A majority of inmates being released today have not been required to "earn release" but rather have been "automatically released." Parole boards used to examine a prisoner's "preparation" for release, including whether she or he had a place to live, a potential job, and family support. With determinate sentences [fixed prison terms in which parole boards have no say], these factors are not relevant to release. When of-

fenders have "done their time," they are released no matter what level of support is available to them or how prepared they are for release.

One ramification of this is that in a growing number of cases prisoners have "maxed out" on their sentences and are being released unconditionally. Because of new so-called truth-in-sentencing laws (mandating that a prisoner serve most of his or her sentence behind bars and not on parole), by the time some prisoners get sprung, the penal system no longer has any hold over them. In 1977 only four percent of prisoners maxed out; by 1999, 18 percent did. "We have about 150,000 people getting out scot-free each year now—no supervision, nothing," Petersilia told me recently. And although some of these are minor offenders who served short sentences, many are what the former assistant attorney general Laurie Robinson calls the "baddest of the bad"—prisoners who failed to qualify for any early-release credits, or who had committed such violent crimes that they were ineligible for early release. "In Massachusetts," Mark Kleiman says, "you can graduate from a super-max facility at Walpole—where the lights are on all the time, you never

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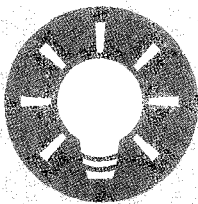


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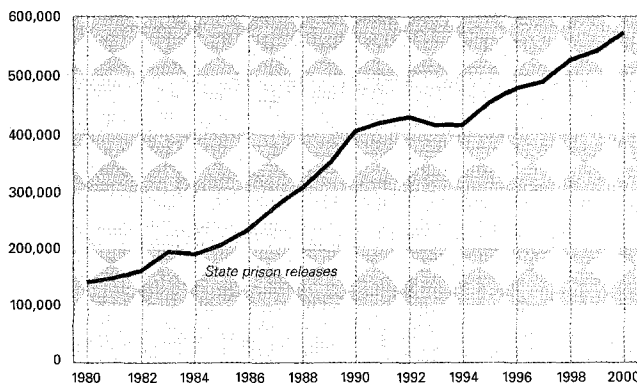
see another human face because all the guards are wearing hockey masks, and you leave your cell one hour a day for exercise—straight to the street. And that is not atypical. But nobody ought to be able to walk straight from a prison to the street. Inmates need to decompress. That's what halfway houses were supposed to be for."

Over the past year or so some of the dismal facts about "prisoner re-entry" have come under new scrutiny and have begun to generate some creative thinking. For one thing, parole clearly needs to be reformed. It is not working: more than 40 percent of released inmates are back in prison within three years. Part of the problem is the all-or-nothing response to technical violations. "We need a system that does not have as its only sanction ending the experiment of parole for someone entirely," says Kleiman, who advocates a range of prescribed and immediate but less drastic sanctions, such as short confinements in "halfway-back houses," for people who have been caught in technical violations of parole.

A handful of jurisdictions around the country—including Richland County, Ohio, and Fort Wayne, Indiana—are now experimenting with a promising institution called re-entry court, which is charged with overseeing a prisoner's reinte-

THEY'RE BACK

Prisons are disgorging ever larger numbers of ex-convicts



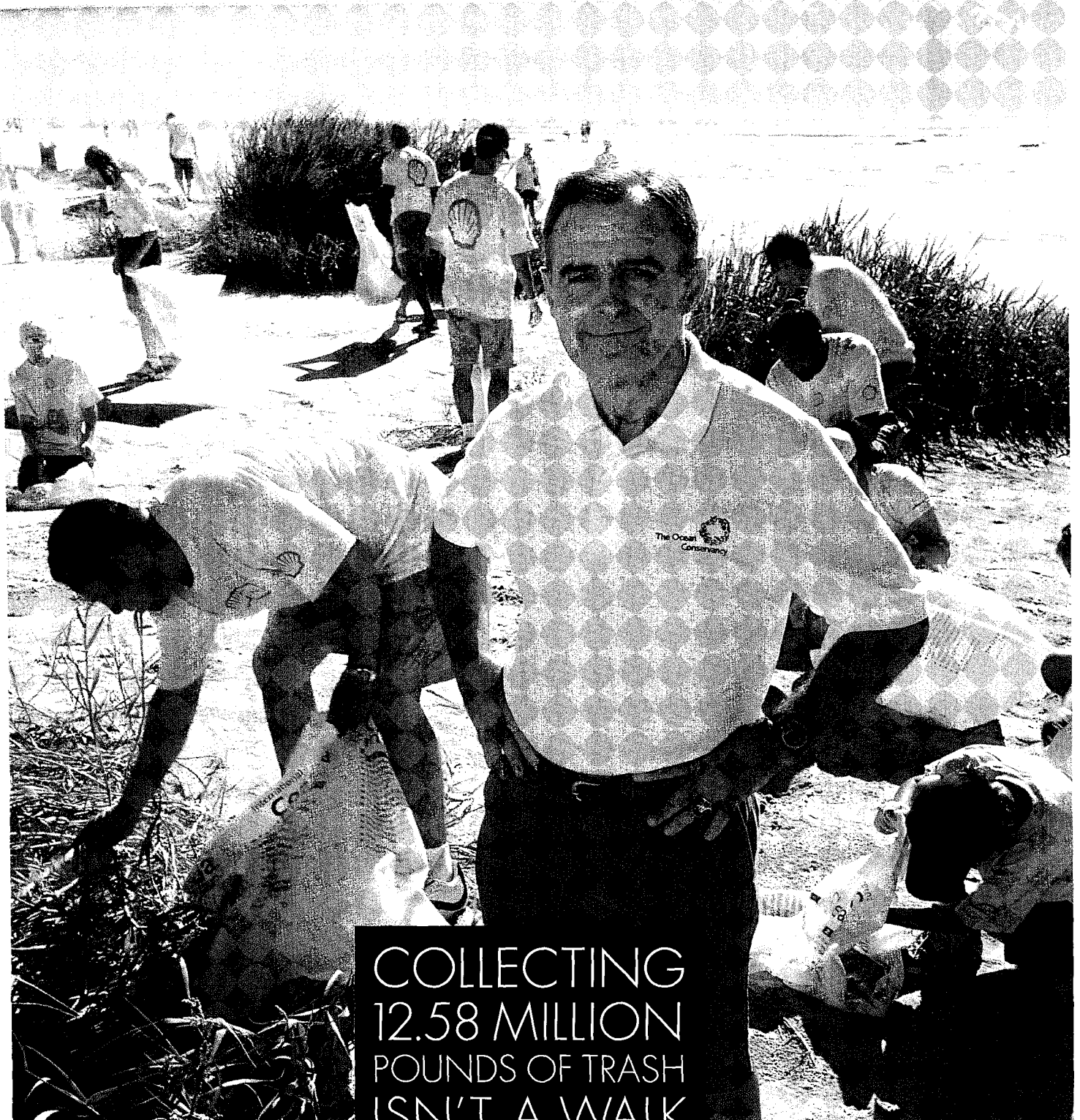
gration into society. Here "conditions of parole are openly agreed to and openly enforced," as Jeremy Travis and Sarah Lawrence, of the Urban Institute, write. "If a new crime is committed, all bets are off and the parolee is prosecuted for the new crime." The violations of parole that now fill prisons, though, are handled differently—with "support services, close judicial monitoring, graduated sanctions for failure to meet conditions, and local detention where needed to enforce the orders of the court." Travis has argued for a twist on this approach: making sentencing judges responsible for coming up with a re-entry plan for prisoners. Judges would tell men and women they had just sentenced that they must begin preparing in prison for the return home, and would order drug rehabilitation, job training, or whatever other programs were called for.

At the same time, prison programs have been experiencing a renewal. A few prisons are involving families and community groups in an inmate's release plan before he is let out. The Vera Institute of Justice's Project Greenlight, for example, brings representatives of community organizations into the Queensboro Correctional Facility, in New York, to talk to prisoners about jobs they might seek once they're free. It also provides counseling for prisoners and their families before the prisoners' release. When prisoners serve longer sentences, as they have done in recent years, family ties are likely to be more attenuated, meaning that inmates are likely to require more help to reconstruct them. Of course, not everybody wants to participate in easing a relative's transition from prison; often family members have been the inmate's victims. But when prisoners can go home to families, they seem to fare better, both in the crucial first few months after release and later.

A few prison systems, notably Oregon's, have been trying out more-practical kinds of vocational training, geared to job openings in fields such as telemarketing and computer-aided mapping of water and tax districts. This has cut recidivism. Meanwhile, Missouri's prison system, under the leadership of Dora Schiro, has come up with a more comprehensive approach whose premise is that prison life should actually resemble real life as much as is practicable. Every offender engages "during work and non-work hours in productive activities that parallel those of free society," as Schiro describes the rules in a paper written for the National Institute of Justice. "In work hours offenders go to school and work and, as applicable, to treatment for sex offenses, chronic mental-health problems, and drug and alcohol dependencies. In non-work hours they participate in community service, reparative activities, and recreation."

Schiro says that from 1994 (when the program went into effect) to 1999 the proportion of inmates returned to prison in Missouri for felony offenses fell from 33 percent to 20 percent. That's impressive in itself. Still more promising, however, is the larger idea this approach evokes. It may be that as a society we want to keep our incarceration rates higher than those of other industrialized democracies (though not, surely, as high as they have been, given how many prisoners are parole violators and drug offenders). After all, there is fairly good evidence that the prison boom was responsible for about a quarter of the decline in crime in the 1990s. But if we do want to keep our prisons full, we must endow them with a purpose broader than incapacitation. We will have to take up again, in new form, the goal of re-making prisoners for life beyond bars. We will have to accept that the question before us is not only how stringently we want to punish people in prison but also what kind of people we want to see emerge from it. ■

Margaret Talbot is a senior fellow at the New America Foundation and a contributing writer at The New York Times Magazine.



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[Household Debt]

SPENDTHRIFT NATION

It's a precarious situation: U.S. consumer spending is sustaining the economy—but we need to save more to prepare for the surge in retirements. Here's how to boost personal saving without undermining the economic recovery

BY MICHAEL CALABRESE
& MAYA MACGUINEAS

The U.S. economy is afloat today thanks only to the undaunted American consumer. Breaking the pattern seen in other downturns of the past half century, consumption grew at a brisk pace through the three quarters of recession in 2001. Despite plunging stock prices, the spending binge continued last year, financed by record borrowing, a huge wave of mortgage refinancing and home-equity loans, a large federal tax cut, and anemic household saving. Were it not for the persistence of American shoppers, the economy would surely have headed into a tailspin.

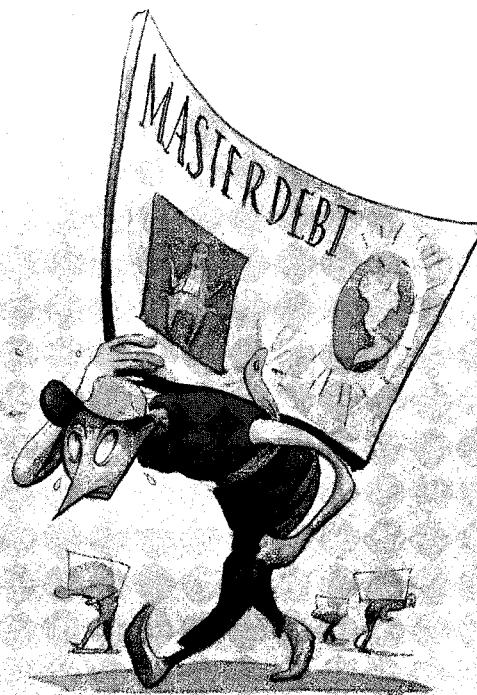
But a credit-card recovery makes for an uncertain future. At \$8 trillion, household debt in the United States now exceeds Americans' annual disposable income for the first time. Debt-service burdens for both mortgages and consumer credit are at near record levels—a striking fact, considering that interest rates are close to a forty-year low. Both personal bankruptcies and home foreclosures hit all-time highs last year. Despite the fact that Baby Boomers should be in their prime saving years, the household saving rate for Americans plummeted during the 1990s, dropping almost to zero in the fall of 2001—a level not seen since the Depression. Even though the personal saving rate has risen slightly since 2001, Americans are still saving less than half the post-World War II annual average of 8.6 percent of their after-tax income.

Our savings shortage is of particularly grave concern because to prepare for the retirement of the Boomer generation we ought to be building a more productive economy that can increase its output while relying on relatively fewer workers—and we can't do that simply by buying more cars and DVDs. Consumption may help to fuel the economy in the short term, but it is saving, not spending, that provides the capital for productive investment and long-term growth.

U.S. policymakers therefore face a dilemma. The policies they have chosen for stimulating the economy—tax cuts to encourage consumption, and low interest rates to bolster the housing market—make the long-term structural problem of undersaving more severe. We have reached the point where mounting consumer debt and shrinking stock portfolios are

likely to induce people to tighten their belts. But if consumer profligacy is supporting the economy, might not an abrupt spending retrenchment cause the economy to dip back into recession or worse? Consider what would happen if the saving rate were suddenly to rise to 1990 levels: people would save more than \$300 billion that they otherwise would have spent, quickly pushing GDP growth into negative territory. This is the “paradox of thrift,” John Maynard Keynes's theory that increased saving can trigger lower employment, lower incomes, and ultimately slower growth.

How can we increase saving without undermining the economic recovery? During the economic boom of the mid-1990s we relied on the government to strengthen anemic national saving by running budget surpluses and paying down the national debt. More recently we have relied on



consumer spending to prop up the economy during the bust. Neither practice can be sustained, however: individuals cannot keep borrowing money and liquidating home equity forever; politicians cannot be counted on to save surpluses over an extended period. What our national policy should do, then, is in fact the reverse: encourage individuals to save while the government practices deficit spending—in the short term, anyway—to keep the economy from running out of gas.

Government spending is the simple part. Congress could do many things to stimulate the economy in the short term: provide one-time tax rebates; extend unemployment benefits; accelerate public investment in infrastructure and education; spend more on defense. Any such deficit spend-

ing, however, should be temporary and targeted at stimulating the economy; as the economy recovers, the government should restrain spending, with the goal of balancing the budget over the course of the business cycle (meaning that it's okay for the government to run deficits during a recession as long as it runs surpluses during times of prosperity).

Using public policy to encourage higher levels of individual saving is harder. Fortunately, current conditions provide a golden opportunity: by reorienting President Bush's ten-year tax cut, and by changing how some of the saving incentives in the current tax code work, it would be possible both to give money back to Americans (in the form of subsidies to boost personal saving) and to hold government savings constant (because these subsidies would be drawn from funds that otherwise would have been spent on the tax cut). Indeed, this solution might finally allow the major political parties to break through the protracted stalemate over Social Security and tax cuts while at the same time addressing the serious shortcomings of the two federal programs—the private system (to which half the work force lacks access) and Social Security (whose long-term viability is in question)—that have the biggest effect on personal saving.

We'll address the pension problem first. In many respects America's private pension system is the envy of the world. With nearly \$7 trillion in assets, traditional and 401(k)-style pension plans account for the vast majority of financial assets accumulated by households in recent years. One reason the system works as well as it does is that powerful incentives—in the form of tax breaks and employer matching contributions—encourage individuals to contribute a portion of their income to an employer-sponsored saving plan. Additional reasons include the convenience and discipline provided by automatic payroll deductions, and the tax penalties that deter early withdrawals.

But our private pension system is perverse: it provides the strongest saving incentives to the affluent, who need them least, while covering fewer than half of all workers. More than 70 million Americans have no access to a tax-subsidized payroll-deduction saving plan, and therefore tend to save very little for retirement. As a result, fewer than 60 percent of today's workers aged forty-seven to sixty-four are likely to receive benefits equal to even half their pre-retirement income when they stop working.

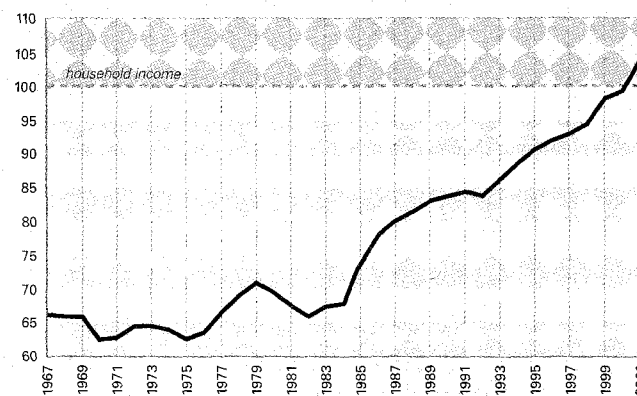
Even when less well-off workers are able to participate in an employer-sponsored plan, the tax incentives for saving are upside down: income-tax deductions are worth the most to high-bracket taxpayers, who need little incentive to save, whereas the lowest-paid third of workers, whose tax burden consists primarily of the Social Security payroll tax (and who have no income-tax liability), receive no subsidy at all. Federal tax subsidies for retirement saving exceed \$120 billion a year, but two thirds of that money benefits

the most affluent 20 percent of Americans. This is no way to structure a pension system.

The solution is to give every individual access to a tax-subsidized savings account, regardless of whether his employer sponsors a pension plan. Think of it as a government-facilitated 401(k): just as employers match contributions by eligible employees, the government would match voluntary saving by providing a refundable tax credit that would be deposited directly in workers' accounts. (Regular tax credits are simply dollar-for-dollar reductions in the total amount an individual has to pay in income taxes; a "refundable" tax credit is one that, when it is worth more

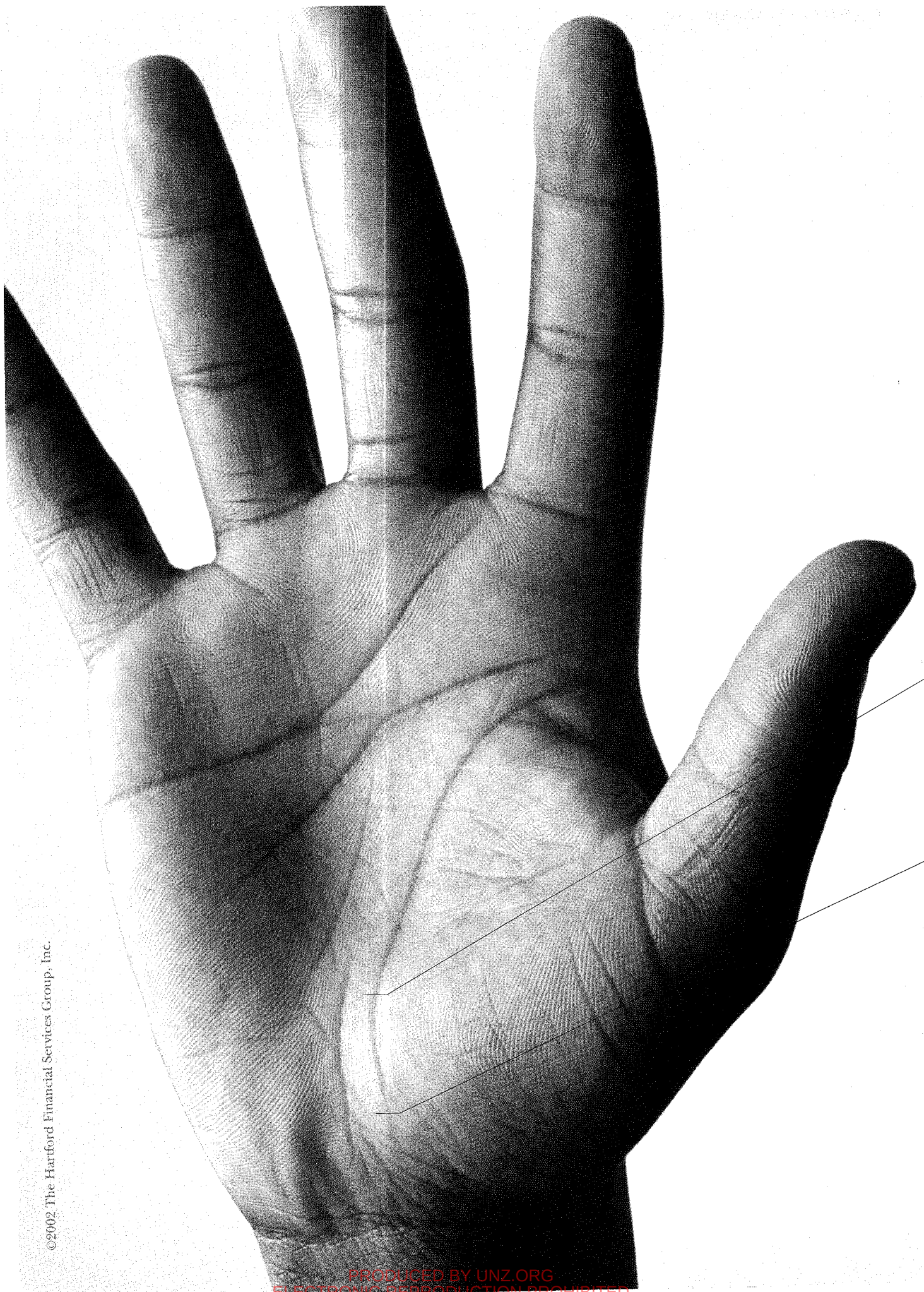
CONSUMER DEBT AS A PERCENTAGE OF DISPOSABLE INCOME

Household debt has risen dramatically in the U.S. since the 1980s—to the point where total household debt recently surpassed total household income



than what the individual owes in income taxes, pays money directly to the individual. So even the poorest workers, who owe nothing in income tax, would automatically get direct matching contributions to their accounts from the government.) To create an even stronger incentive for saving among those who currently save least, the government should provide proportionately larger matches for saving by the bottom half of wage earners. Refundable tax credits to subsidize saving would give employers a greater incentive to contribute in behalf of low-wage and part-time workers, because even the employer's contributions would be eligible for federal matching. Universal 401(k) accounts would inevitably add directly to national saving, since low earners save next to nothing now.

Creating a universal and portable system of accounts would not be hard. Employers are already required to withhold and remit workers' income and payroll taxes. Workers could simply specify a monthly saving deduction, which employers would forward (along with other tax deductions) to an IRS clearinghouse. The Federal Thrift Savings Plan, which already manages 401(k)-style accounts for three million military and civilian federal personnel, could house small accounts. Individuals would always have the option of transferring their account balances to a private financial institution or a future employer's 401(k). The



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greater flexibility and portability of citizen-based savings accounts would benefit employers and employees alike: companies could get out of the business of administering pension plans without denying their employees valuable tax breaks for saving.

The other part of the retirement-saving equation—Social Security—is more challenging to fix. Given the multitrillion-dollar shortfall the program is facing, the nation's retirement system is clearly in need of shoring up (it would take an immediate infusion of more than \$4 trillion for the program to make good on all promised benefits over the next seventy-five years). But efforts to prepare for the future by having the government accumulate Social Security reserves before they are needed have had only minimal success. Not only have the program's actual surpluses been tapped to pay for other government programs, but the mere presence of the Social Security surplus has affected budgetary decision-making by causing the federal budget to appear larger than it otherwise would. The solution is to wall off the savings that Social Security accrues by introducing a system of individually owned investment accounts that would augment—though not completely replace—the retirement benefits paid out by the current system. Depositing the savings in individuals' personal accounts would provide a far more effective lockbox than the government ever could.

There are two significant obstacles to creating individual accounts. The first is the large initial cost. If even a small portion of the money each worker pays into Social Security is channeled into that worker's personal account, much of the money to pay benefits to future recipients will have to come from somewhere else. Simply borrowing the funds—an approach many politicians favor, because it appears relatively painless—would undermine the purpose of using the accounts to build up national savings. (Personal saving would be increased, but government saving would be decreased by the same amount.) It would also unfairly shift huge costs to future generations, which would be burdened with repaying the borrowed funds. The second obstacle is that personal accounts could threaten the important redistributive dimensions of the current system, whose progressive design helps those with lower incomes relatively more than those with higher incomes.

Both these obstacles can be surmounted. The start-up cost could be partially offset by setting up the private accounts with money the government now expects to lose to President Bush's ten-year tax cut. Repealing the tax cut (or—perhaps more feasible, given current politics—simply canceling the tax reductions scheduled to be implemented in future years) would provide \$400 billion to \$1 trillion of seed funding for these accounts, enough to get them started while other necessary changes to the traditional Social Security system, such as slowing the growth of benefits and

gradually increasing the retirement age, were phased in. Since entering office the President has been trapped between two campaign promises: to make large tax cuts and to reform Social Security. So far he has accomplished the former at the expense of the latter. But by diverting funds into personal investment accounts for all Americans, the President could actually achieve both the effect of tax cuts (since he would still be returning money to citizens) and Social Security reform.

The redistributive aspects of the current system could be preserved by making the funding of these private accounts progressive: all American workers would get accounts, but lower-income workers would get government-funded matches for their contributions. For instance, the government could contribute two dollars for every dollar saved by the lowest-income workers, one dollar for every dollar saved by workers who make slightly more, and so forth, with government subsidies phasing out at fifty cents for workers earning around the national median income. Workers would also be guaranteed a minimum benefit that would keep them out of poverty—a guarantee that Social Security does not offer at present. In short, these accounts—let's call them "progressive private accounts"—not only would help to shore up Social Security for the long term and provide workers with an additional source of retirement income, but also would maintain the program's fundamental commitment to a progressive design.

Shifting our economic priorities from consumption to saving will not be easy. But whether created separately or together, government-subsidized universal 401(k) accounts and progressive private accounts for Social Security would help individuals to prepare for retirement and would set our economy on a course for long-term prosperity. And fortunately these are instances in which good policy could make for good politics. For one thing, a major reform and expansion of the private pension system could appeal equally to workers and employers. For another, Democrats and Republicans are locked in bitter fights over Social Security reform and the tax cut. Linking the two issues would allow Republicans to claim a major victory by establishing personal accounts while ensuring that the trillion dollars earmarked for the tax cut remains the property of individual citizens. Democrats, meanwhile, could claim a major victory by redirecting a tax cut from the wealthy to the average worker while shoring up Social Security in a manner that protects the interests of the most vulnerable Americans. In any event, with the American consumer sinking further into debt and the retirement of the Baby Boomers fast approaching, we need to do something soon. ■

Michael Calabrese, the director of the Pension Policy Program at the New America Foundation, was formerly general counsel to the Congressional Joint Economic Committee. Maya MacGuineas, a senior fellow at the New America Foundation, has more than a decade of experience in public policy relating to the budget, entitlements, and taxes.

THE BLACK GENDER GAP

It may be the greatest policy achievement in recent history: over the past decade significant numbers of formerly welfare-dependent black women have successfully entered the work force. But what about black men?

BY KATHERINE BOO

Ten years ago shoe-leather urbanologists found their primary source material in the late-night crack market. Today they're better off rising early and divesting themselves of \$1.10 in pocket change to ride the U8 bus, a leading economic indicator of the American inner city. The U8, which serves the easternmost corner of Washington, D.C., is what's known in public-transport parlance as a circuit bus. Its African-American riders are among the most isolated of the urban poor: those who not only can't afford private transportation but can't afford to live near efficient versions of the public kind. These men and women rely instead on buses that wend from one remote housing project to another, collecting riders who are eventually deposited at some central location from which they can take subways or straight-line buses to where the jobs are.

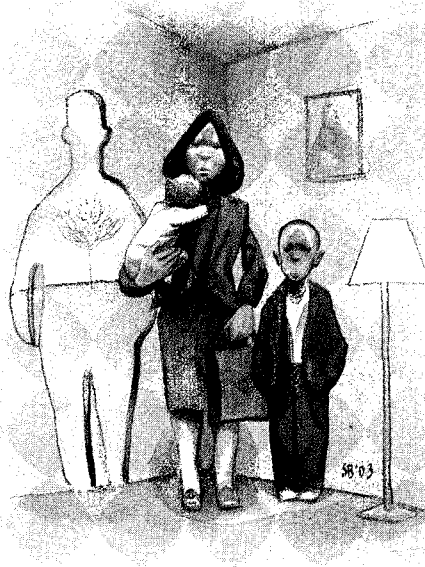
Every weekday at dawn the U8 offers its passengers the predictable dystopian ghetto vista: a drug-treatment clinic, its parking lot aglint with spent needles; a mini-mart with a sign on its door begging, "PLEASE!!! No ski masks allowed!!!!" Only the view inside the U8 is novel and promising. Wearing secondhand suits, often accessorized by fold-up strollers, the U8's riders are the sleepy embodiment of what may be the greatest social-policy achievement in recent U.S. history: the upward mobility of what many not long ago deemed a permanent underclass.

From a peak of 5.1 million families in 1994, welfare rolls have dropped to 2 million, while the poverty rate for African-American children has hit an all-time low. African-American teenage childbearing has declined, and the median annual income for African-American households has surpassed \$27,000, reaching the highest level ever recorded. The U8's hundreds of daily riders suggest how firmly the idea of work has taken root even in public-housing communities where a decade ago 90 percent of residents lived primarily on government support.

Only when we break down the numbers by sex do these soothing data bare the domestic-policy challenge that has to be seriously engaged. Something vital is missing on America's U8s: black males.

In the most generous gloss, the 1996 federal welfare-reform act aimed to do more than promote work and reduce the tax burden of welfare payments. Explicitly and ambitiously, it endeavored to strengthen historically fragile low-income families. Last year, declaring the task of getting people to work well under way, the President and congressional Republicans put the promotion of marriage atop their social-policy agenda. But even as they spoke, welfare reform's inroads on poverty were opening a chasm between the status and prospects of black women and those of the men they might marry.

A grim home economics: In the 1990s the employment of young black females dramatically increased, despite the fact that many of those working women were single mothers. Meanwhile, the employment of their less-encumbered male counterparts stagnated, even in a period of unprecedented economic expansion. Today black women are more likely to work than white or Hispanic women, whereas black men are less likely than their counterparts. Among non-college-educated young blacks the gender gap is starker. Findings by the social scientists Paul Offner and Harry Holzer, published recently by the Brookings Institution, indicate that whereas young non-college-educated Hispanic males now work at about the same rate as their white counterparts, the rate for African-Americans is a staggering 30 percentage points lower. In fact, fully half of these young black men are unemployed or not in the labor



force—and these figures don't even include men in jail. A ten-day census of early-morning ridership on the U8 last autumn tallied 2.7 women for every man.

Set aside the profound emotional implications of this gender gap—the loneliness of newly working women struggling to raise children by themselves; the resentment of men watching female contemporaries succeed, with considerable government assistance, in jobs at which they themselves have failed or from which they've been displaced by women. The greater poignancy comes as social science increasingly ratifies a conservative cliché: for children a two-parent household is the most effective anti-poverty program we know. Three out of four white children are born to such households. Only one in three black children is.

The children of single parents are more likely to be

abused, become sick, use drugs, commit crimes, be imprisoned, and have out-of-wedlock children—the litany, from decades of longitudinal study, is familiar. Clearly, two-parent households have the potential to create the continuity-rich context in which children’s intellectual and emotional qualities may take wing. Yet the grave predicament of the contemporary black male, and its fundamental connection to the fate of black children, has managed to slip quietly through two distinct cracks: the one between competing special-interest blocs of the poverty industry, and the one between the hardened ideological categories of right and left.

Paul Offner has felt a chill from both directions. A Princeton-trained social scientist, Offner is best known in public-welfare circles for a radical career choice. In 1995 he decided to road-test some of the policy prescriptions he had devised while working as a senior aide to Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan and as the chief health-and-welfare counselor to the Senate Finance Committee. Offner accepted a job administering what was then one of America’s most dysfunctional urban bureaucracies: Mayor Marion Barry’s District of Columbia Medicaid office, whose cost overruns had left Washington near bankruptcy. While stabilizing costs and constructing one of the country’s most inclusive health-coverage programs for the poor and the working class, Offner was struck by how the funding patterns of what he calls the welfare-industrial complex contribute to the neglect of black men. “The emotional testimony at congressional hearings on welfare reform is inevitably going to be about day care, or welfare time limits, or definitions of activities that qualify as work,” he says, “because women and children are the social-services constituency—the individuals with whom the government and the nonprofits interact. Men are barely on the screen, except as deadbeat dads. But if you go into families’ homes”—Offner is a veteran volunteer tutor of Southeast D.C. schoolchildren—“you can’t help thinking about how much difference a decent father could make in how a child behaves and develops.”

The best contemporary social science on nonworking black males tends to wrestle with causality: Why did so many black men abandon the labor force in the first place? Does the legacy of slavery, which gravely distorted kin and work relationships, weigh more heavily on males than on females? Which came first, and matters more, the decline in the manufacturing sector or the rise in black men’s incarceration rates?

If there is less rigorous discussion about how, *now*, to create opportunity for black males, it may be because the political utility of such a debate is uncertain. Drawing acute distinctions between the deserving and the undeserving poor, the political right resists heavy investment in a child-abandoning, work-resistant, lawbreaking population. But-tressing the right’s position is the fact that previous federally funded efforts to put young black males to work have produced few appreciable results. The left, meanwhile, is reluctant to advocate for men in the face of the considerable needs of women—such as the need for better child-care options than

the typically stultifying urban centers to which welfare reform’s next generation has been entrusted.

Yet there is artifice in the notion that black men and women are pitted against each other in a fight for a limited pool of public aid. After all, the plight of the poor black male translates into the plight of the ludicrously over-freighted poor black female. (Black women now earn 96 percent of what white women earn, but that’s still on average only \$15,000 a year. Surely they could also use the 70 percent of white male income that black men earn: \$20,000.) On the U8 one morning the most animated discussion among young mothers concerned the much anticipated release of a painkiller called Bayer Back and Body. A working, child-nurturing partner would certainly be a stronger anodyne, but the R&D isn’t there. Offner notes that whereas he can secure plenty of public and private funding for research on health care, the extensive studies of the poor black male population that he’s doing with Harry Holzer have been self-financed.

For those willing to write off a generation or two of children and fathers, a case can be made for policy passivity. The current rift between black men and women may be simply a transitional trauma in the process of birthing a better culture. It’s also possible that black women will solve some of their problems by marrying in larger numbers outside their race. But at this moment in history new developments inside and outside the inner city may provide new opportunities for social policy to reach the young black male.

The level of promise can easily be overstated. First, it’s harder to help poor black men get jobs than poor black women, in part because many employers perceive women to be more trainable, a better employment risk. Second, as the Harvard sociologist Orlando Patterson persuasively contends, employment does not necessarily make black men more likely to marry. (Whether this is because of slavery’s legacy or because the decently employed black male has so many romantic options that he may not be inclined to choose just one is a live sociological question.) Still, inside ghettos the market for crack has significantly weakened in recent years, and no equally profitable illicit product has yet replaced it. Thus the appeal of “the honest eight”—the legitimate job—may be quietly increasing among men, along with the appeal of a breadwinning woman. And outside ghettos, more demonstrably, there’s a rich new body of knowledge, gleaned from welfare reform, about how to bring the seemingly unemployable into the economic mainstream.

It’s worth recalling that for decades the government failed miserably in a series of schemes to encourage welfare mothers to work. But in the 1990s rigorous evaluations of local welfare-to-work programs provided a detailed blueprint from which the current law was constructed. That new law contained a vital acknowledgment: rectifying disincentives and adjusting outlooks among the poor costs more in the

short run than issuing welfare checks. Since 1996 we've been willing to pay that short-term cost in behalf of low-income women. Unfortunately, most poor black men lack the singular qualification that made their female counterparts the object of sustained intellection and public money: consumption of taxpayers' dollars in the form of monthly welfare checks.

What if unemployed fathers who owed child support were mandated to participate in work-related activities or community service? What if they then received stipends while learning skills or searching for jobs with the assistance of community-based programs that have established a track record in helping women? Program evaluations tentatively find that intense, employment-oriented programs for disadvantaged fathers increase the likelihood of their working, paying child support, and—for the most estranged fathers—becoming more involved with their kids. Although the 1996 law allows states to spend welfare-reform money on such programs, a 2000 survey found that most states chose not to mandate them. And in the states that *were* willing to invest in men, stiff remedies for their disadvantages consistently lost out to soft, milky ones. Thus today poor noncustodial fathers can easily avail themselves of any number of group-therapy-like programs to inculcate responsible fatherhood. But if those fathers take the government hint, find a job, and actually marry the similarly encouraged mothers of their children, the newlyweds will face a significant increase in their tax burden because of the way the Earned Income Tax Credit is structured. As both the old and new welfare systems have demonstrated, financial incentives can change family patterns. But for fathers many of those incentives still run in the wrong direction.

The left used to argue that a narrow population neglected would erupt into a wide public threat. This is perhaps the moment to invoke the specter of long, hot summers and armed, envenomed men. But in truth inner-city women, not outsiders, are the ones who will bear—are bearing—the brunt of the black gender gap.

Nonetheless, and beyond all expectation, many of those women have managed to hold up their end of the new social contract. As they raise the next generation, a generation that of course includes males, it is perhaps not just intimate family ties but larger civic ones that merit re-examination. Low-income men who have dropped out of the labor force obviously lack the innocence and promise of, say, the dozens of tiny riders on the U8, clinging like limpets to mothers who will shortly deliver them to Kiddies Kollege, All My Children, and the other bleak federally funded nurseries clustering around the U8's points of debarkation. But for better or worse, the long-term well-being of those children—and of their country—depends less on their day care than on their fathers. ■

Katherine Boo is a senior fellow at the New America Foundation and a reporter for The Washington Post. She has received a Pulitzer Prize and a MacArthur Foundation fellowship for her work on poverty.

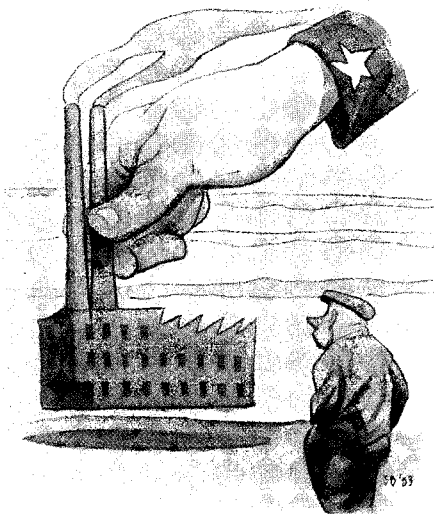
[Jobs & Productivity]

ONE-DIMENSIONAL GROWTH

Since 1998 the United States has lost 11 percent of its manufacturing jobs—and the much vaunted productivity gains of the digital revolution seem to have disappeared. We need an industrial policy that produces real growth

BY DAVID FRIEDMAN

Even before the collapse of the stock market and the recession of 2001 dispelled the illusion that we had escaped the business cycle, there were reasons to doubt that America was truly experiencing the miraculous rebirth that some people claimed it was. Although productivity, after years of stagnation, did increase during the boom years of the past decade, even at its late-1990s peak the economy did not produce jobs any faster or for a longer period than previous expansions had. In the ten years 1993 to 2002 the U.S. economy created barely more jobs than in the previous ten years, when the working-age population was smaller. Moreover, job growth in the nineties was strikingly uneven across industries. Since 1998, in fact, America has shed 11 percent of its relatively well-paying manufacturing jobs, the second worst rate of job loss in the past fifty years.



When productivity climbs steadily (that is, when workers keep increasing how much they can produce per hour), consumers can buy more goods and services without triggering inflation. From 1972 to 1995 the country's productivity growth was relatively slow; every time the economy started to heat up, consumption would outstrip production, driving prices and interest rates higher and sending the economy reeling. Around 1995, however, productivity growth suddenly appeared to accelerate. This raised hopes that the expansion of the nineties would somehow be different from its predecessors—that it would be longer-lasting, maybe even sustainable indefinitely.

But revised data now reveal that America's productivity growth after 1995 was only half as strong as the initial numbers showed. Even these gains may turn out to have been more superficial than they now appear. When imported products are available at very low prices, as they were from cash-strapped Asian manufacturers in the late 1990s, U.S.

productivity can artificially appear high. Production-related imports, such as semiconductors and engines, accounted for 50 percent of the value of American manufactured goods in 2000, up from 24 percent in 1987. U.S. productivity skyrocketed, as domestic assemblers relied on bargain-basement parts from abroad to generate high-value finished goods for the U.S. market with less and less labor—which means that apparent domestic-output gains may owe more to foreign producers' ingenuity than to our own. A slight statistical adjustment in import values, or a fall in the value of the dollar, would erase almost all of the reported productivity gains.

Yet we were seduced by the fantasy that a handful of Wall Street whiz kids and their computer-savvy counterparts had somehow reinvented the economy—a fantasy that seemed to justify America's growing reluctance to foster traditional industrial development. As early as 1969, for example, New York City adopted a plan that explicitly called for the systematic displacement of the city's "low wage" industrial base by a subsidized "modern" office economy. (The city provided tax breaks and development assistance to businesses in the office economy while it zoned and regulated many businesses in the industrial economy out of existence.) Over the next three decades this policy stripped 600,000 well-paying manufacturing jobs from what was once America's largest and most diverse production center, replacing them with a small number of professional positions at one extreme and many more low-paying service jobs at the other.

Despite these consequences, most other U.S. industrial centers followed suit. Seattle and Portland—which not so long ago were hardscrabble lumber, aircraft, and shipping communities—have mutated into elite post-industrial enclaves over the past decade. Soaring property prices have driven out the working class. Increasingly anti-industrial policies have alienated even the regions' most coveted manufacturers, such as Boeing and a once world-class cluster of metals and machinery producers. Similar one-dimensional growth has long been apparent in deindustrialized Boston, San Francisco, and other cities. The drive to transform our cities seems in part to reflect an almost aesthetic or cultural distaste for blue-collar work among our political, economic, and media leaders.

The advent of the New Economy seemed to validate this strategy, at least for a while. If investing in appealing white-collar sectors such as Internet development, software, and finance spurred reasonably robust job growth, then why not tailor domestic and international policies to favor office parks at the expense of factories? But many of the problems thought to have been vanquished by America's purported economic transformation have now returned. U.S. job growth is anemic. The 1990s expansion generated record disparities in wealth. U.S. trade deficits are at all-time highs. The economy is increasingly reliant on public-sector and consumer spending—a big reason why public deficits and private debt are ballooning.

Although it became fashionable to imagine that America could flourish as a deindustrialized society, manufacturing remains crucial for prosperity. The average production-sector job creates three times as many additional employment opportunities as the average service job. Given that more than 60 percent of U.S. workers lack college degrees, and that manufacturing disproportionately employs the non-college-educated and pays wages roughly 20 percent higher than other sectors, it is not surprising to find that as manufacturing declines, economic inequality rises.

If our goal is to create jobs, boost productivity, reduce income inequality, and ensure our international competitiveness, then America needs an industrial policy that cultivates development across a broader spectrum. An effective industrial policy would have several key elements. One would be to re-examine our policy of maintaining a strong dollar—a practice that benefits the financial-services industry and affluent American consumers but undercuts the ability of domestic manufacturers to compete with foreign producers. A second element would be to exercise a more balanced trade policy. Over the past decade the U.S. government has gone to great lengths to force other economies to open up their financial markets and to protect intellectual property for the sake of New Economy companies worried about copyright infringement or MP3 downloads. But it has turned a blind eye to the unfair trade practices in the goods-producing sectors of those economies. For instance, many American steel companies went bankrupt when the government failed to enforce its own trade laws and allowed collapsing Asian economies to flood the U.S. market with low-cost steel.

But the most important part of an effective industrial policy would be to abolish the discriminatory state and local business incentives, including land-use rules, that have over the past decade increasingly favored information-age jobs over working- and middle-class jobs. The growing political influence of New Economy corporations transformed tax, land-use, and development policies throughout much of the country. As a result it became virtually impossible for an "old economy" business, such as a factory or a shipping company, to secure permits in a timely manner in many communities. Meanwhile, broadband and fiber-optic companies received billions of dollars in tax and other subsidies, leading to the misallocation of some \$3 to \$4 trillion in investment capital. Today those regions that excessively favored New Economy interests are bleeding jobs and revenues, while those few that did not are experiencing sustained growth and development.

A more balanced industrial policy might temporarily lower our production numbers (from the artificially inflated to the genuine), but it would maximize the diversity of our economy, generate the widest range of employment opportunities for all our citizens, and stimulate real advances in our collective skill and creativity. ▀

David Friedman is a senior fellow at the New America Foundation.

THE PARENT TRAP

Working American parents have twenty-two fewer hours a week to spend with their kids than they did thirty years ago. Here's how to help the new "juggler family"

BY KAREN KORNBLUH

The American family changed dramatically over the last decades of the twentieth century. In the postwar years up to the early 1970s a single breadwinner—working forty hours a week, often for the same employer, until retirement—generally earned enough to support children and a spouse. Today fully 70 percent of families with children are headed by two working parents or by an unmarried working parent. The traditional family—one breadwinner and one homemaker—has been replaced by the “juggler family,” and American parents have twenty-two fewer hours a week to spend with their kids than they did in 1969. As a result, millions of children are left in unlicensed day care or at home with the TV as a babysitter.

Yet the nation clings to the ideal of the 1950s family; many of our policies for and cultural attitudes toward families are relics of a time when Father worked and Mother was home to mind the children. Every time a working parent has to risk a job to take a sick child to the doctor, and every time parents have to leave their children home alone or entrust them to inadequate supervision, families are paying the price for our outdated policies.

The 1950s family is not coming back anytime soon, however, in part because the economic conditions that supported it no longer exist. Starting in the 1970s de-industrialization, corporate restructuring, and globalization led to stagnating wages and greater economic insecurity. Many women went to work to help make ends meet. Indeed, conservatives who lament that feminism undermined the traditional family model overlook the fact that the changing economic environment made that model financially impossible for most American families.

These days most women and men—across all income levels—expect to remain in the workplace after having children. Thus to be decent parents, workers now need greater

flexibility than they once did. Yet good part-time or flex-time jobs remain rare. Whereas companies have embraced flexibility in virtually every other aspect of their businesses (inventory control, production schedules, financing), full-time workers' schedules remain inflexible. Employers often demand that high-level workers be available around the clock, and hourly workers can be fired for refusing overtime. Moreover, many employees have no right to a minimum number of sick or vacation days: more than a third of all working parents—and an even larger percentage of low-income parents—lack both sick and vacation leave. Though the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 finally guaranteed that workers at large companies could take a leave of absence for the birth or adoption of a baby, or for the illness of a family member, that leave is unpaid. This means that the United States is one of only two countries in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development without

paid maternity leave—and the other country, Australia, is actively considering providing it.

Many parents who need flexibility find themselves shunted into part-time, temporary, on-call, or contract jobs with reduced wages and career opportunities and, often, no benefits. A full quarter of American workers are in these jobs. Only 15 percent of women and 12 percent of men in such jobs receive health insurance from their employers. In other developed countries health benefits are often government-provided, and therefore not contingent on full-time employment. The United States is the only advanced industrial nation that relies on a voluntary employer-based system to provide health insurance and retirement benefits to its citizens.

Our nation has also failed to respond to the need for affordable, high-quality child care. Schools still operate on an agrarian schedule, closing at three every day and for more than two months in the summer. After-school-care programs are relatively scarce, and day-care standards are uneven. (Training requirements for hairdressers and manicurists are currently more stringent than those for child-care workers.) And the expense of day care—which is often more than the tuition at a state college—is borne almost entirely by parents alone. In stark contrast, most European nations view child care as a national responsibility and publicly subsidize it. In France, for instance, day-care centers and preschools are heavily subsidized—and staffed by qualified child-care workers whose education is financed by the government.



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A sensible modern family policy—that supports rather than undermines today’s juggler family—would have three components. The first is paid leave. No American worker should have to fear losing a job or suffering a reduction in pay because he or she needs to care for a child or a parent. Every worker should be entitled to at least a minimum number of days of paid leave for personal illness or that of a family member, or to care for a new child. In September, California adopted the first law in the country that provides workers with paid family and medical leave, up to six weeks’ worth.

The second component of a smart family policy is high-quality child care. The United States is practically alone among developed countries in leaving day care almost

How to unlink pensions from employment—by providing universal 401(k) accounts that offer government subsidies to the poorest workers—is addressed elsewhere in this issue (see “Spendthrift Nation,” page 102). Unlinking health care from employment could be accomplished in a number of ways. One way would be to expand Medicare to cover all citizens, not just the elderly, thus creating a single-payer system. But a better approach would be to create a system of mandatory self-insurance, with government subsidies for low-income workers and for people taking time off to care for family members. Creating such a system—one that ensures that everyone is covered while keeping costs low—could not be done easily or quickly, of course, but there are precedents. Switzerland, for instance, provides

universal health-care coverage without relying on a single-payer system. Another model can be found closer to home: auto insurance, which almost all American states require car owners to have. In the health-care version of this model everyone would either choose a plan from a regional insurance exchange or be enrolled in a default plan by the government. Participating health-insurance providers would be required to offer a “basic” plan—with a minimum level of coverage—and to cover anyone who applied. Federal subsidies would ensure that no one spent more than a fixed percentage

of income on basic health insurance.

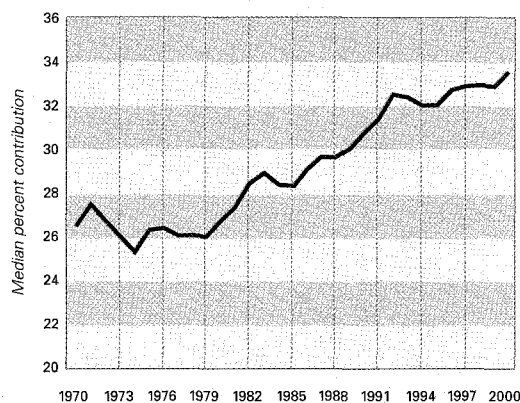
Though the government would have to subsidize those who cannot afford to pay for a basic plan on their own, this cost could be largely offset by redirecting both the funds currently spent on Medicaid and the nearly \$100 billion that workers get in tax breaks through their employer-provided health insurance. Employers should welcome the change, because although they would likely continue to provide employees with the same level of total compensation they do now (for instance, by increasing wages), they would be relieved of the administrative burdens and the restrictions on flexibility imposed by the current social-insurance system.

For the past few decades both Democrats and Republicans have tried to lay claim to the “pro-family” mantle. Neither party, however, has offered a coherent plan for giving American parents the security and the flexibility they need. A plan that offers both would appeal powerfully to the many voters who are having such difficulty balancing their work and family obligations. ▢

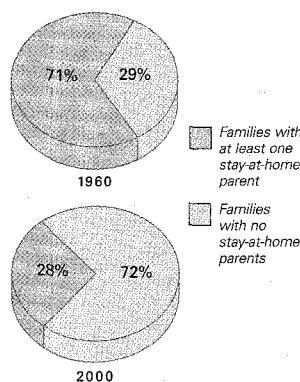
Karen Kornbluh, a fellow at the New America Foundation and the director of its Work and Family Program, was previously the deputy chief of staff at the U.S. Department of the Treasury.

CHART DATA SOURCES: (LEFT) THE ECONOMIC POLICY INSTITUTE. (RIGHT) U.S. CENSUS BUREAU, BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS

CONTRIBUTION OF WIVES' EARNINGS TO FAMILY INCOMES, 1970-2000



DECLINE OF THE STAY-AT-HOME PARENT



entirely to the private market. At a minimum, U.S. day-care facilities must be held to higher standards than they are now, and parents should be eligible for subsidies, so that they do not have to shoulder the cost of this care all on their own. In addition, preschool and after-school programs should be universally available.

The third and most important component is more fundamental: we should sever the link between employers and basic benefits. In today’s labor market, when working parents need maximum flexibility and people move frequently from job to job, it no longer makes sense to rely on employers for the provision of health insurance and pensions. The link between them is an industrial-era relic that often denies benefits and tax subsidies to parents who require nonstandard working arrangements. We need a new approach to our social-insurance system, one in which control and responsibility lie with individuals, not their employers, and in which government subsidies are granted based on an individual’s ability to pay, rather than on whether he or she works full time, part time, or flex time. Unlinking benefits from employment could do wonders for the American family: parents could have the flexibility of part-time work with the benefits that today accompany full-time work.

[Education]

A GRAND COMPROMISE

Saving American education requires ending the reliance of public schools on local property-tax bases

BY JAMES P. PINKERTON

In 1983 a federal education commission warned that “a rising tide of mediocrity” threatened the well-being of the republic. That tide has not ebbed. Nearly two decades later, in 2000, the Program for International Student Assessment found that American fifteen-year-olds ranked fourteenth in science literacy and eighteenth in mathematics literacy among the thirty-two countries administering the test, scoring below the average for developed countries in both categories. And although President George W. Bush and Congress recently united behind the grandiosely titled No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, few observers outside Washington, D.C., believe that the legislation will have anything more than a marginal effect on student performance.

All Presidents claim to be “education Presidents,” but the schools drift along, up a bit, down a bit, always costing more money, but never making the sort of dramatic gains witnessed elsewhere in American life. Why should this be?

U.S. schools today are the product of three different educational eras: the agricultural (which produced the nine-month school year), the industrial (which emphasized rote learning and regimentation to fit the rhythms of mass production), and what might be called the experimental (which promoted a range of nostrums, from sex education to Whole Language, often at the expense of basic skills). Each of these has left its own layer of sediment to muck things up in the present. The worst legacy of the past, however, is localized school funding, which not only produces great regional inequalities in spending per pupil but also nurtures the persistent incompetence of many schools.

Today about 45 percent of school funding comes from local

sources, such as property taxes. In Virginia, for example, average per-pupil spending in rural Hanover County is only half that in suburban Arlington County. In New Jersey, which has been struggling to equalize school funding for three decades, the schools in Elizabeth spend 70 percent more per pupil than do the schools in Toms River.

Beyond state lines the disparities grow even worse: among school districts with enrollments of 15,000 or more, spending ranges from \$3,932 per pupil in DeSoto County, Mississippi, to \$14,244 in Elizabeth, New Jersey. Rectifying such imbalances requires a national solution. “Most of the resource inequality cannot be resolved at the state level,” David Grissmer and Ann Flanagan, analysts for the Rand Corporation, have written. “States spending the least are southern and western states that also have a disproportionate share of the nation’s minority and disadvantaged students.” Yet the federal government does little to address this systemic inequality, and continues to contribute only about seven percent of the total spent on elementary and secondary schools.

So what’s an “education President” to do? Happily, the means of reforming elementary and secondary education does not lie in some obscure theory, or in some other country. It has been right in front of our eyes for decades: the model of the Pell Grant program.

Colleges and universities compete, in effect, in a single national market. The federal government pumps \$10 billion a year into college education through Pell Grants. The GI

Bill and other aid programs add billions more. Pell Grants have an inherently equalizing effect on per-student funding: every qualifying student in the country has access to the same amount—a maximum of \$4,000 a year—and can spend it at the accredited college of his or her choice. Thus much of higher education is more equitably funded than K-12 education. Moreover, because Pell recipients decide where their grants are applied, the program is driven by students, not administrators.

Why not build on the Pell model, and apply it to elementary and secondary education? Total K-12 public school spending, for some 47 million students, is currently about \$350 billion a year, slightly more than \$7,000 per



pupil per year. Expanding on the Pell model would mean giving every American elementary and secondary school student \$7,000 to spend at the school of his or her choice. Unlike Pell Grants, this money would be given to all students, regardless of the level of need. This would create, in effect, a grand compromise between left and right, guaranteeing more-equal funding (which the left wants) and more choice for students (which the right wants).

Making this happen, of course, would require a radical reshuffling of financial responsibilities among the various levels of government. But such a reshuffling is not unprecedented; after all, though states and localities once bore the cost of raising militias, national defense is now a federal responsibility. Since 9/11, of course, federal responsibility for homeland defense has increased, to the point where a new Cabinet department has been legislated.

Education is no less a national priority than defense. Education reformers should not shrink from the full implications of their goals; it's time for the federal government to do more for education—and for state and local governments to do less. It is true that the \$350 billion a year in spending that the federal government would have to take on from state and local governments is no small amount. But at three percent of GDP, it is less than the annual U.S. military budget, and less than what the federal government spends on health care each year. And because state and local governments would be able either to spend the money currently allotted to education on other priorities or to rebate money to taxpayers, any federal tax increases or spending cuts made to accommodate this new system would be at least partially offset.

Of course, many conservatives and some liberals might object to the loss of local control over schools. But local control is in some ways detrimental to education and to equity. In the Jim Crow South, after all, local control was synonymous with “separate but equal”; today an insistence on local funding ought not to be a cover for maintaining separation and obviously unequal schools.

Moreover, conservatives ought to be pleased with the second element of the grand compromise: expanded choice. The current method of funding K–12 education balkanizes school districts into pockets of excellence or indifference; a federal grant program would make all schools part of a national system, in which no child would be forced by accident of region or neighborhood to attend a bad school.

Because students in such a system could attend the schools of their choice, they would create a self-correcting market. If a given school was inadequate, students could go elsewhere, taking their funding with them. The fragmentary evidence of the past few years suggests that schools faced with competition will struggle to retain “market share.”

Of course, if schools in Mississippi are substandard at \$4,000 per pupil, there is no guarantee that they would be

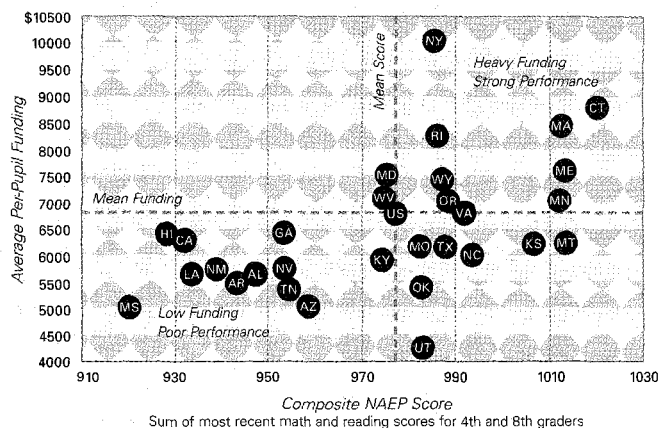
better at \$7,000 per pupil. One of the bitter lessons of the twentieth-century welfare state is that a bureaucracy has an apparently infinite capacity to absorb extra money without producing additional output. But under this proposal schools would have a compelling interest in responding to an exodus of students; a school that failed to respond positively would lose its financial base.

Critics of this plan will say that it is a form of vouchers—and they will be correct. But this plan can't be derided as an attempt to undermine the public schools by bleeding away their students. Rather, it's an attempt to lift all schools into the mainstream by equalizing funding across the country, improving the odds that every child receives an education appropriate for this century.

What schools would be eligible to receive this grant money? Public schools only? Religious schools? Home schools? Ideally, every kind of school, though as a practical

PUBLIC SCHOOL FUNDING VS. PERFORMANCE

Funding disparities between states partly explain the gaps in student achievement



matter certain schools would not be made eligible right away. The politics of reform must sometimes yield to the slower-moving politics of the possible. But once the principle of federally funded choice was established, its application would expand as the education market reacted to the new incentives.

This is just the outline of a grand compromise on education. If the right celebrates “liberty” untrammelled by bureaucracy and the left celebrates “rights” guaranteed, if necessary, by the government, the two can come together in behalf of a system of federally funded equal opportunity. Although neither side will like everything about this proposal, both might yet decide they like the status quo even less. And federally funded choice is a bold assault on the orthodoxies of the status quo. ▀

James P. Pinkerton, a senior fellow at the New America Foundation, is a columnist for Newsday and a contributor to Fox News. He formerly served as a domestic-policy adviser to Presidents Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush.

CHART DATA SOURCE: CENSUS BUREAU; NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL STATISTICS; NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS

THE FUEL SUBSIDY WE NEED

Oil dependence is still the Achilles' heel of the American empire. It doesn't have to be—and if we don't want to lose economic ground to Europe, it can't be

BY RICARDO BAYON

Terrorists intent on damaging the United States need not fly planes into America's buildings; they need only do something to raise the price of oil. Far-off international crises—and relatively mild forms of extortion—have in the past brought the U.S. economy to its knees. The price spikes caused by the Arab oil embargo of the early 1970s and the Iranian revolution of 1979 each led to economic misery for the United States in the form of a deep recession, increased unemployment, and mile-long lines for gas. The Gulf War and its aftermath produced a milder version of the same phenomenon in the early 1990s. Every major U.S. recession of the past three decades has been preceded by a rise in the price of oil.

The United States remains acutely vulnerable to such price fluctuations today. The American economy is, after Canada's, the most energy-dependent in the advanced industrialized world, requiring the equivalent of a quarter ton of oil to produce \$1,000 of gross domestic product. We require twice as much energy as Germany—and three times as much as Japan—to produce the same amount of GDP. Overall the United States consumes 25 percent of the oil produced in the world each year. This binds us to the Middle East, which still holds more than 65 percent of the world's proven oil reserves. Even if we were to buy all our oil from Venezuela, Canada, and Russia, or to find more oil here in the United States (which currently holds only 2.9 percent of proven reserves), Persian Gulf producers with excess capacity, such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, would still largely dictate the price we paid for it.

America's economic vulnerability to oil-price fluctuations has led Washington to strike a tacit bargain with Saudi Arabia and other Persian Gulf oil producers. In return for U.S. military protection and silence about the more unsavory aspects of their societies, these countries increase production when prices get too high and cut it when they get too low. In addition, they price their oil in dollars and recycle their petro-profits through U.S. financial institutions. But this has made the United States vulnerable not only to a sustained spike in oil prices but also to the possible fall of the dollar. In part because the dollar has been strong, we have been able to consume more than we produce and then to make up the difference by borrowing from abroad. As a result, our current

net international debt has risen to \$2.3 trillion, or 22.6 percent of GDP. What would happen if a war in Iraq went badly or if Islamic extremists gained ground in key oil-producing states? Oil prices could rise and the dollar could fall, inflicting a double blow to the U.S. economy from which it could not easily recover.

The way to escape this abiding insecurity is to wean the U.S. economy—and the world economy, too—off oil. And the way to do that is to encourage the commercial development of a technology called the hydrogen fuel cell. Solar power and windmills will surely be important parts of our energy future, but only the fuel cell can address our oil dependency by challenging the primacy of the internal-combustion engine.

Fuel cells are actually a relatively old technology (they were invented in 1839, Jules Verne wrote about them in the 1870s, and they were used by U.S. astronauts in the 1960s), and the concept underlying them is simple: by mixing hydrogen and oxygen, fuel cells generate both water and electricity. Not only do fuel cells turn two of nature's most abundant elements into enough energy to power a car, but they create no toxic emissions (drinkable water is their only by-product). And fuel cells are completely quiet, meaning that it is now realistic to imagine living in a world of silent cars and trucks.

The technology is not science fiction: fuel cells are on their way toward commercial viability. Fuel-cell-powered buses are running in Vancouver, Chicago, London, and parts of Germany. BMW has a prototype car powered solely by fuel cells. Honda, Toyota, and DaimlerChrysler announced recently that they would begin shipping fuel-cell cars to retail customers around the world; General Motors and Ford are not far behind. Honda's car was shipped to its first major customer—the city of Los Angeles—at the beginning of December.

Geoffrey Ballard, the founder of the Canadian manufacturer Ballard Power Systems has said, "The internal-combustion engine will go the way of the horse. It will be a curiosity to my grandchildren." Even large oil companies believe that they must embrace hydrogen power. In a recent analysis of future energy scenarios Royal Dutch/Shell put forth the possibility that hydrogen could displace oil as the fuel of choice within the next thirty to fifty years.

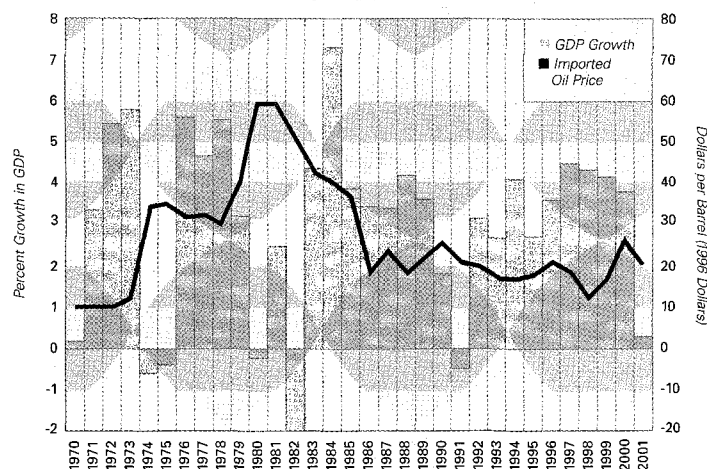
Why haven't fuel cells moved into commercial use more quickly? There are two main reasons. First, the cells themselves are relatively expensive. Fuel cells capable of producing one kilowatt of electricity now cost more than \$3,000—several times what it costs to produce a gas turbine or an internal-combustion engine that can deliver the same amount of power. That will not be a big problem for long, however, because with investment from car manufacturers and oil companies pouring in, the price of fuel cells is falling fast. (When oil was first introduced, in the early 1900s, it, too, was much more expensive

than the alternatives—primarily coal—but it was soon overwhelmingly preferred, because of its cleanliness, efficiency, and ease of use.) Thus the real obstacle is the second one: we do not yet have the infrastructure necessary to deliver hydrogen cheaply and effectively to cars, trucks, and generators throughout the country. Such an infrastructure would include technologies capable of extracting hydrogen from natural gas or water, along with the means to transport that hydrogen to a network of “gas stations” nationwide.

How fast hydrogen enters the mainstream will be determined largely by how much support the government pro-

VULNERABILITY OF U.S. ECONOMY TO OIL-PRICE SHOCKS

Price increases have preceded every major recession since 1970



vides. Bear in mind that government choices and government subsidies account for much of our oil dependence in the first place: automobiles truly conquered America (helping oil to become the fuel of choice) only after the mid-1950s, when—partly as a way of promoting national security—Washington agreed to pay as much as 90 percent of the cost of building what was then called the National System of Interstate and Defense Highways. This program cost the federal government more than \$1.2 trillion from 1958 to 1991. Some of this money came from taxes, license fees, and so forth, but David Roodman, an analyst at the Center for Global Development, estimates that the federal government still subsidizes automobiles at a rate of \$111 billion a year above and beyond what it reaps in auto taxes and fees. (And that estimate does not include the associated environmental, health, and military costs of burning fossil fuels.) Other sources of energy and productivity—such as nuclear power, the national power grid, coal, and the Internet—have benefited from substantial government subsidies over the years. A similar federally sponsored project to build a hydrogen-distribution infrastructure would surely pay back the investment many times in the long run.

Even if the government did not actively subsidize a hydrogen infrastructure, it could point the nation toward a hydrogen future by ceasing to subsidize the burning of fossil fuels. Unfortunately, however, Washington is at the moment

neither encouraging hydrogen development nor discouraging fossil-fuel use. President Bush’s energy plan proposed considerably more in subsidies for fossil fuels and nuclear energy—\$2 billion over ten years to support the development of oxymoronic “clean coal,” and billions more for nuclear energy—than for hydrogen fuel cells, wind, or any other form of renewable energy. Currently the government is spending about \$77 million a year on hydrogen fuel cells, or about a third of what the President has proposed for “clean coal.”

Obviously, there would be short-term costs to building a hydrogen infrastructure—but the costs of inaction would be higher. If the United States does not take the lead in this industry, some other country will. It is no accident that the first fuel-cell-powered cars to hit the market will be European (DaimlerChrysler) and Japanese (Honda and Toyota). Consider that while the Bush Administration was proposing more support for coal and nuclear energy, the European Union was announcing that it would henceforth be obtaining 22 percent of its electricity (and 12 percent of all its energy) from renewable sources. The EU also announced that it would spend some \$2 billion (twenty times previous amounts) on renewable-energy research over the next five years. A central focus of that money is expected to be hydrogen energy. Additionally, a number of European companies, including DaimlerChrysler, have pledged billions of dollars to the EU’s work on fuel cells. Meanwhile, the Japanese government—which prior to the EU’s announcement was widely believed

to have the most ambitious hydrogen-energy program on the planet—is believed to have spent as much as \$220 million on fuel-cell research in 2002. That is three times what the U.S. Department of Energy spent on such research, and 50 percent more than the Energy Department is requesting for *all* forms of hydrogen-related spending in 2003.

If the United States is left behind in adopting a promising new technology, it won’t be the first time. In the 1970s America was the undisputed leader in both wind- and solar-energy technologies. By the early 1980s, however, federal support for these technologies had been drastically cut, falling far behind what both the Japanese and various European governments provided to develop them. Today—when wind is becoming cost-competitive with natural gas as a source of energy, and the solar-energy industry is growing by a remarkable 30 percent a year—the largest producers of wind energy are Danish (Vestas and NEG Micon), and the largest producers of solar energy are Japanese (Sharp and Kyocera) and European (BP Solar and Shell Solar).

History repeats itself: if current trends continue, the leaders of tomorrow’s hydrogen economy will not be American. For the United States this will mean continuing vulnerability to oil-price shocks, increased insecurity, and diminishing economic competitiveness. ▀

Ricardo Bayon is a fellow at the New America Foundation.

CHART DATA SOURCE: U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

TAKING STOCK

The demands of our two politically mightiest generations—Boomers and retirees—have knocked the country's public-investment priorities out of whack

BY JONATHAN RAUCH

I sometimes think sourly of the Constitution's majestic call on the government to provide for the general welfare when my teeth are cracking together as I bounce over one of the District of Columbia's crater-sized potholes. Or when I forlornly watch bicyclists glide past my car as I wait, and wait, in the gridlocked morning traffic of northern Virginia. Government does grand things, but little of what it does is more important—or more noticeable when neglected—than the routine job of providing and maintaining public capital.

Markets, entrepreneurialism, and the miracle of compound interest are every bit as marvelous as their enthusiasts tell us, but private growth depends on public capital. Governments will often invest shortsightedly or inefficiently, as anybody knows who has spent ten minutes listening to Congress debate a highway or water bill. Still, public capital, even when less than ideally provided, often has the important benefit of stimulating private investment and thus economic growth. Build a road, and development follows. Invent a new method of encryption, and new forms of e-commerce flower. Much of what government does tends to crowd out private activity. Public capital, in sharp and important contrast, often crowds it in.

Two main categories of public capital are infrastructure (physical capital) and research and development. Public investment has gone through three distinct periods: a boom until the mid-1960s; a bust through the early 1980s; and then a moderate recovery, though not to pre-1970 levels. In response, the accumulated stock of public capital—relative to the size of the U.S. economy—climbed through the 1960s, leveled off, and then entered a long, gradual decline.

This is not as bad as it might seem. For one thing, the boom of the 1950s and the 1960s was occasioned largely by the postwar push to build the national highway system and by the need for new schools to accommodate the Baby Boomers. Now, of course, the highway system is finished and most of the schools we need are in place. Moreover,

starting in the 1980s governments found themselves spending more of their capital budgets on computers, software, and other kinds of information technology that depreciate much faster than do bridges or buildings. That is probably why the capital stock continued to decline in value even after investment recovered in the 1980s: the lower figures reflect not so much a neglect of bricks and mortar as a shift toward bits and bytes. Roads and bridges, for example, are mostly in good shape, bone-rattling exceptions notwithstanding. Congress passed two large highway bills in the 1990s (politicians love nothing better than to pave the country), with the result that road conditions in the national highway system have steadily improved.

Even so, that classic example of how a public-capital bottleneck can restrict private-sector economic growth—to wit, the traffic jam—has grown more common. Recently the Texas Transportation Institute estimated that in 2000 alone, congestion cost the drivers of seventy-five urban areas a combined total of almost \$70 billion in wasted fuel and time. Although the country's roads are not falling to pieces, more investment—especially in the better use of

existing roads (through smart-highway technology and congestion pricing, for example)—would not go amiss.

From an economic point of view, then, the road system appears better than adequate but less than optimal. The same might be said of public infrastructure more generally. It turns out that periods of rising and declining investment in infrastructure coincide rather nicely with periods of greater and lesser economic growth. That might be simply because the country has more to spend on public capital in boom times. But in 1989 an economist named David Alan Aschauer set the economics profession on its ear with a paper arguing that the causality ran at least as strongly the other way. Investment in public capital, he found,

substantially increased productivity—"which implied," as he recalled in a recent phone interview from Bates College, in Maine, where he teaches, "that a substantial portion of the productivity slowdown we'd experienced could be connected to a slowdown in public investment."

Aschauer's findings set off a wave of research into the economic effects of public capital. The results came out all over the place, but the central tendency of various studies was to find that infrastructure investment does indeed spur productivity, though not as dramatically as Aschauer had initially found. In 1998 Aschauer revisited the subject in a paper called "How Big Should the Public Capital Stock Be?" He used data from forty-eight states to estimate the ratio of public to private capital that seemed to maximize economic



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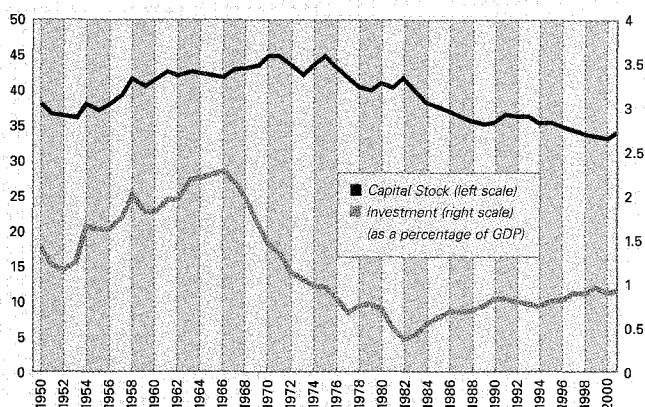
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growth. Various methods all put that optimal ratio at roughly sixty cents of public capital for every dollar of private capital. Then he noted that the actual ratio of public to private capital in those forty-eight states averaged only about forty-five cents per dollar. "The public capital stock did not keep pace with the private capital stock during the 1970s and 1980s," he wrote. The implication was that the country might be considerably better off with more public capital. "Overall, we're

PUBLIC CAPITAL STOCK AND INVESTMENT

U.S. capital stock is holding steady, despite a post-1960 decline in investment



doing pretty well," Aschauer told me, "but there's anecdotal and statistical evidence that we could be doing better."

In his paper, however, Aschauer went on to make a point that enthusiasts of government spending will find less congenial: most of the benefit from increased investment in public infrastructure comes only if the investment is funded by reducing other government spending. The reason is that additional public investment financed by tax increases or government borrowing comes partly at the expense of private investment. In fact, Aschauer says, his findings suggest that public spending overall is too high from the point of view of economic efficiency, even as spending on public capital in particular is too low.

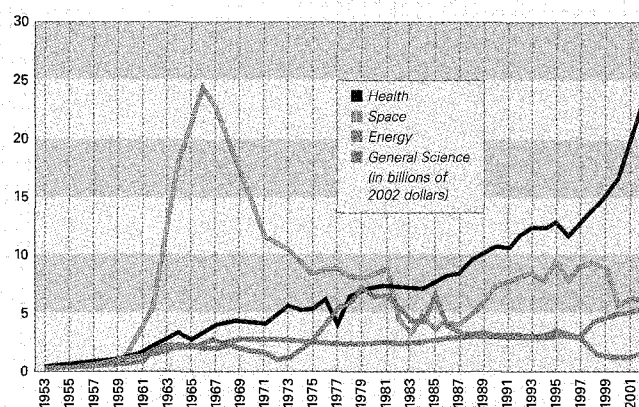
What of research and development? Here, by any measure, the United States is the world's powerhouse. America alone accounts for almost half of R&D expenditures among the thirty countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development; indeed, America's R&D spending is more than double that of No. 2, Japan. Moreover, recently R&D spending has continued apace in the United States even as it has slowed in many other places, so the gap has, if anything, widened. America's university system is the envy of the world, and its scientific establishment is unequalled in the history of civilization. Today only a few countries spend more than the United States on R&D as a percentage of their GDP, and with the important exception of Japan, they are small economies—in 2000 Finland and Sweden—rather than major com-

petitors. All of that gives reason for pride and optimism.

However, the *composition* of America's public R&D has changed dramatically in recent years, and perhaps excessively. Whereas most R&D spending was roughly flat (in constant dollars) through the 1990s, health-related R&D went soaring into the stratosphere—almost literally, given that the level now nearly matches, and may soon exceed, spending on space research at its peak, in the moon-shot

FEDERAL NON-DEFENSE R&D

Health care is "crowding out" other types of federal research



years. The extent of this change is hard to overstate. Medicine and biology accounted for almost half of the government's fiscal 2002 research budget. In fact, the National Institutes of Health alone has accounted for essentially *all* of the increase in Washington's non-defense research spending since the mid-1990s, and today more than half of all federal basic research is conducted under the NIH's auspices. It is as if the moon shot had become a health shot, with the NIH replacing NASA. Moreover, because the federal government is such an important sponsor of university research, the tilt in Washington's priorities is mirrored in academia.

"I think we're out of whack," Roger C. Noll, a Stanford University economist who studies R&D, told me recently. "Only about two thirds of the students who want to be physical-science and engineering majors can be, because of enrollment constraints." (Training scientists is expensive and heavily reliant on government support.) "We're right in the middle of the growth curve for information technology, and this is not a wise time to be cutting back on the basic research that supports those technologies," he says. "We really do know that the kinds of work people are doing in solid-state physics and algorithm design and other areas of information technology have a huge payoff."

Why, then, the lurch toward health? Here our two stories, one about infrastructure and the other about R&D, appear to converge. The U.S. population, as everyone knows, is aging. Baby Boomers are beginning to peer at mortality, and they don't like what they see. They want no expense spared in the search for new treatments for cancer

and heart disease and Alzheimer's, and they are a large cohort that politicians are eager to please. Another influential constituency—possibly the most influential of them all—is retirees, and the aging of the population means that there are more and more of them. For more than thirty years Washington has been devoting steadily more resources, measured as a share of GDP, to writing benefits checks to individuals through entitlement programs like Social Secu-

[Bests & Worst]

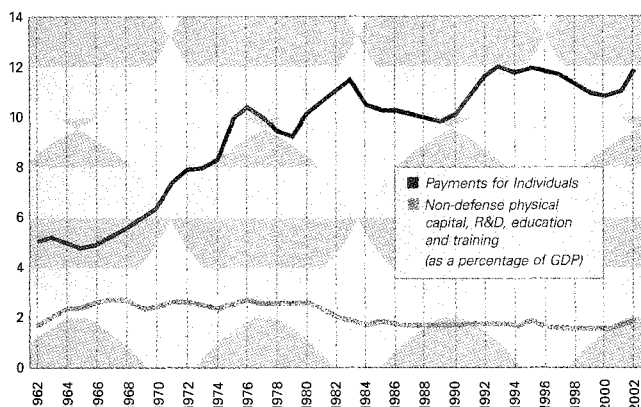
THE AMERICAN PARADOX

*The country with the most patents,
Nobel laureates, and millionaires
is also the country with the highest levels
of poverty, homicide, and infant mortality
among modern democracies.
A case for revising our social contract*

BY TED HALSTEAD

FEDERAL BENEFITS AND PUBLIC INVESTMENT

The growing gap reflects the demographically driven shift from investment to consumption



urity and Medicare, while the share devoted to public investment has remained the same.

In sum, the demands of two politically mighty generations have shifted government's priorities toward consumption as a general matter and, within the R&D budget, toward the sort of research that most resembles consumption. Good health and long life are very important, but in economic terms they are not seed corn. That does not mean the future is being starved, but it probably does imply that opportunities for a still better future are being missed.

The hopeful news is that Washington has begun to notice, at least where R&D is concerned. A presidential advisory council on science and technology recently called for a better-balanced research portfolio to bring the physical sciences in line with the life sciences; and complementary efforts got under way in Congress to double the budget of the National Science Foundation—the NIH's counterpart in the physical sciences—over five years.

Infrastructure, however, is primarily in the hands of state and local governments, which at the moment are cutting back. What is true in flush times is doubly true in lean ones: the squeakiest wheel gets the grease, and long-term investment rarely squeaks the loudest. When public capital suffers relative to other priorities, that is generally because of thoughtlessness rather than hostility. Whether you are a state legislator crunching a budget or a voter losing your molars to a pothole, the remedy amounts to this: pay attention. ▀

Jonathan Rauch is a correspondent for The Atlantic.

Nothing illustrates America's profound contradictions more starkly than a comparison with other advanced democracies: among these the United States is either the very best or the very worst performer on a wide range of social and economic criteria. We are simultaneously the leader and the laggard among our peers—almost always exceptional, almost never in the middle.

Without question we are the richest, most powerful, and most creative nation on the planet. Our economic and military might stems from our embrace of a particularly high-octane brand of capitalism, supported by financial markets that are deeper and broader than any others, labor markets that are more flexible, and a culture of entrepreneurialism that is unparalleled. These attributes have turned America into the world's unrivaled engine of innovation and wealth creation. We boast more patent applications than the entire European Union; almost three times as many Nobel laureates as Britain, our closest competitor; and more business start-ups per capita than almost every other advanced democracy. One in twelve Americans will start his or her own business, evincing another outstanding American trait—our great tolerance for risk. And our export of movies, television shows, music, and fast-food chains makes us, for better or worse, the dominant cultural force on the globe.

But like the Roman god Janus, America has two faces. Despite being the richest nation on the planet, we suffer from higher rates of poverty, infant mortality, homicide, and HIV infection, and from greater economic inequality, than other advanced democracies. We have far more uninsured citizens, and a lower life expectancy. On a per capita basis the United States emits considerably more greenhouse gases and produces more solid waste. We spend more per student on K–12 education than almost all other modern democracies, yet our students perform near the bottom on international tests. We have the highest rates of teen pregnancy and among the highest proportions of single parents, and American parents have the least amount of free time to spend with their children; indeed, the average American works nine weeks more each year than the average European. Our performance on many social indicators is so

poor, in fact, that an outsider looking at these numbers alone might conclude that we were a developing nation.

How do we reconcile these two faces of America? To a remarkable degree the United States seems to have exchanged social cohesion and a broad-based middle class for economic dynamism and personal freedom. Have we abandoned what used to be referred to as the common good?

Some believe that our bifurcated national condition represents a necessary and acceptable tradeoff; others believe it is a Faustian bargain. Even those who would tolerate a considerable amount of social fragmentation as the price of prosperity, however, must concede that this bargain is yielding ever diminishing returns. Our economic growth over the past decade has been weaker than it was in the 1950s and 1960s. Yet our levels of economic inequality and social breakdown have clearly worsened. In short, we are producing fewer of the goods and more of the bads, suggesting that our nation is increasingly out of balance. What is more, the very idea of a necessary tradeoff between our social and our economic

well-being is un-American. It runs against the idealistic foundation on which our republic was built.

To improve the nation's social health and economic vitality at one and the same time will require a new social contract for America. Our current social contract is now as antiquated as it was once innovative. Its primary author, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, would be the first to tell us so. "New conditions impose new requirements upon government and those who conduct government," Roosevelt said in 1932. "Faith in America, faith in our tradition of personal responsibility, faith in our institutions, faith in ourselves, demand that we recognize the new terms of the old social contract."

America has so far experimented with three social contracts, each of which reflected the political forces of its time. The purpose of the first, in the eighteenth century, was to found a nation. The goal of the second was to put it back

together after the Civil War. The third—first articulated in FDR's New Deal and later expanded in Lyndon B. Johnson's Great Society—sought to build a mass middle-class society by relying on ambitious government programs and new economic regulation.

It is now time for a fourth American social contract. To fit the post-industrial age it must be able to reconcile the

competing demands of flexibility and fairness. In a time characterized by constant job mobility, a proliferation of consumer choices, just-in-time production, and—perhaps most of all—increased uncertainty, individuals, firms, and governments all need unprecedented flexibility. Fairness, meanwhile, springs from the commitments to meritocracy and shared prosperity that have inspired our nation since its inception. A social contract that simultaneously enhances both flexibility and fairness will require new roles and responsibilities for all three parties to the contract: government, business, and the citizenry.

In the public sector our political leaders must stop imposing false choices on the American people. All too often our two-party system frames issues

as if flexibility and fairness were mutually exclusive. Republicans are fond of advocating for school choice and Social Security privatization, on the grounds that these would confer more choices and flexibility on all citizens. Democrats, meanwhile, typically oppose such proposals, on the grounds that they would undermine fairness and the economic security of ordinary citizens. As these pages suggest, however, there are elegant ways to square these circles: for instance, by pairing school choice with a national equalization of school funding.

Our elected officials must dare to think big once more. Major advances in our nation's well-being have usually resulted not from tinkering at the margins of existing institutions but, rather, from bold new programs—the Homestead Act, Social Security and Medicare, rural electrification, the race to space, the GI Bill. A modern equivalent of such big

THE TWO FACES OF AMERICA

This list of "bests" and "worsts" is based on a variety of sources—including statistics from the United Nations, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, and a number of other groups and experts—but the basic criteria are consistent. Among advanced democracies, America had to rank in the top three for a category to be listed under "bests," and in the bottom three for a category to be listed under "worsts."

(Where applicable, all rankings were determined on a rate basis or as a percentage of population.)

BESTS	WORSTS
Gross domestic product	Poverty
Productivity	Economic inequality
Business start-ups	Carbon-dioxide emissions
Long-term unemployment	Life expectancy
Expenditure on education	Infant mortality
University graduates	Homicide
R&D expenditure	Health-care coverage
High-tech exports	HIV infection
Movies exported	Teen pregnancy
Breadth of stock ownership	Personal savings
Volunteerism	Voter participation
Charitable giving	Obesity

ideas would be to endow every American child with a \$6,000 asset stake at birth, thus inaugurating a new era of more-equal opportunity.

The private sector is no less in need of reform. In the 1980s we began revising our social contract in at least one respect—through a wave of corporate deregulation. This experiment rested on the implicit promise that in exchange for less government regulation, companies would not only create more wealth but also act responsibly, often through self-regulation. But as the dramatic stock-market decline and the corporate scandals of the past eighteen months illustrate, this promise has been broken on both counts.

Not surprisingly, public trust in corporations is low. There are two ways out of this predicament: one is corporate re-regulation; the other is a more sincere effort by business to put its own house in order. The latter would render much of the former unnecessary, but at a minimum we need better accounting standards, stronger defenses against conflicts of interest and insider dealing, and greater restraint in executive compensation.

As part of this movement toward greater corporate accountability, it is also time to relieve employers of some of the administrative responsibilities with which society has burdened them. Now that the median job tenure is down to five years, it no longer makes sense to rely on employers to provide basic benefits such as health care and pensions. Our antiquated system of tying benefits to full-time jobs not only adds to the stress of losing one's job but also deprives parents of the flexibility they need to balance their work and family responsibilities. One way or another, we need to jettison this paternalistic model and replace it with universal citizen-based benefits that are fully portable from job to job.

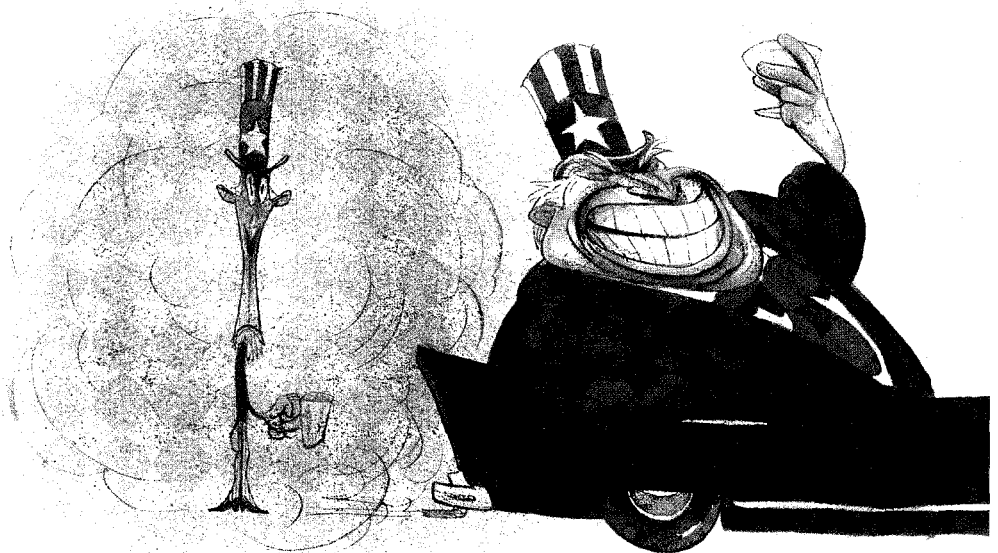
Any new social contract ultimately hinges on a new conception of citizenship. Yet our collective expectations of one another have atrophied in recent years, to the point where even voting—the most basic act of citizenship—is done by only a minority of Americans. Ironically, this emaciation of the notion of citizenship is occurring at a time when ordinary Americans are becoming ever more sophisticated; the majority of Americans now have credit cards, own homes, and have money invested in financial markets. Surely our increasingly sophisticated citizens should be able to handle more civic responsibilities, not fewer. If every American is to be empowered with the right to choose his or her own health insurer, is it too much to ask that each citizen pay a manageable share of the cost? If better incentives are put in

place to help all Americans save for their retirement, is it too much to ask that they actually do so?

Finally, as the definitive stakeholders in the social order, citizens must reclaim their collective power over both the body politic and the marketplace. The only way to free both major parties from the minoritarian groups that now wag the dog—whether teachers' unions or moral fundamentalists—is for Americans to re-enter the political process en masse. Similarly, if the increasing number of American stockholders began asserting their rights, corporate America would become more accountable. Like an unused muscle, collective power need only be exercised to regain its inherent strength.

How likely is it that a new social contract, pairing flexibility with fairness, will emerge? Cynics will be quick to downplay the prospects of large-scale reform, so accustomed are we to incrementalism and tinkering. But what the cynics fail to appreciate is that something very powerful may be brewing—a near perfect political storm.

American history reveals that periods of fundamental reform are typically triggered by one or more of the following: a major war; a large-scale shift from one industrial era to another; extreme levels of economic inequality; a dramatic change in the composition of the political parties. On the rare occasions when these forces coincide, they fundamentally transform society. That is what happened when Reconstruction coincided with the dawn of the first industrial revolution;



it is also what happened when the Roaring Twenties and the Great Depression coincided with the beginning of the second industrial revolution. All the requisite ingredients for change are now coming together again, at the onset of the post-industrial age. If patterns hold, our nation's next major reinvention cannot be far away. ▀

Ted Halstead is the founding president and CEO of the New America Foundation and a co-author, with Michael Lind, of The Radical Center: The Future of American Politics (2001).

“Every headache sufferer will benefit from the wisdom of this book.”

—ROBERT B. DAROFF, M.D., President, American Headache Society



HEAL YOUR HEADACHE

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PRESIDENT, AMERICAN HEADACHE SOCIETY

DAVID BUCHHOLZ, M.D.
of The Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine

THE 1·2·3 PROGRAM
FOR TAKING CHARGE OF YOUR PAIN

Foreword by
STEPHEN G. REICH, M.D.
of the University of Maryland

From the “Headache Doctor of Last Resort,” a revolutionary approach to headaches—endorsed by neurologists, embraced by patients.

In three simple steps headache sufferers can regain control of their lives. The breakthrough program of Johns Hopkins neurologist Dr. David Buchholz begins with the understanding that nearly all headaches, including “tension” and “sinus,” are forms of migraine: a built-in mechanism that you can control by 1) Avoiding the “quick fix,” 2) Reducing your trigger load, and 3) Raising your migraine threshold. Long-term headache relief is finally and truly attainable.

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FLOOR TIME

A new approach to the treatment of autism, one that emphasizes emotional development through intensive one-on-one engagement with autistic children, appears to offer some hope in responding to a disorder that is both epidemic and frequently intractable

BY PATRICIA STACEY

.....

With Walker we began in a darkened room. No matter how one altered his position, his head had always moved like the needle of a compass to the light. Light was his true north. But in dim light, with shades drawn, Walker slowly moved his head away from the window. Still, what he looked at then was not us but objects. Toys.

Arlene instructed me to curl him tightly in a ball and hold him in my arms.

"Hold him close," she said. "Now try to get his attention, but don't smile too much. That would be too much for him." I held him firmly and waited. He looked up at me, and his large, round green eyes penetrated mine. Suddenly his hand rose to touch my face. I shivered—he was seven months old and he had never come this close before. Yet within the instant his hand flew in the other direction; his eyes looked away as if looking at me had been painful.

"It's not that he doesn't want to," Arlene said, "It's that he can't."

From the moment our son, Walker, was born, in 1996, we knew something was different about him. Friends and doctors tried to convince us we were wrong, that all newborns were that way. Even when his problems became more obvious, no one at our HMO would believe us. But we weren't wrong. By the time he was six months old, we had no doubt. Walker was covered with eczema; he struggled to breathe at night; he could barely grab a toy. More difficult to describe, but just as compelling, was the sense that he was suffering some disturbance of the soul—he flailed in space. Somehow, mysteriously, he would look at us only when we were standing far above him, or across the room.

Finally my husband, Cliff, and I managed to talk our way into the office of a senior pediatrician at our HMO in Amherst, Massachusetts. He came in quickly, with an oversized duffel bag. He wrapped a tape measure around Walker's



head and measured him in all the ways it's possible for a doctor to measure a baby, checking his length, his reflexes, his muscle tone. Then he tried to talk to Walker. "Walker," he said firmly. Walker didn't respond. The doctor dug into his duffel and pulled out a fuzzy red ball and began waving it in Walker's face. "Wal-ker!" "Wal-ker!" he said, first firmly, then animatedly, and finally yelling. Walker lay staring out the window, impassive, ineluctably drawn to the light.

The doctor took a seat, removed his glasses, and began. He explained that we needed to prepare ourselves for the limitations of our son's abilities: he might never walk or talk; he might be mentally retarded, perhaps even severely. The doctor wondered if Walker was perhaps blind or deaf. We tried to express our perplexity—the uncanny sense that something was missing from this examination. Walker *was* a distant baby, yet we'd had many moments of connection at far range. Could this strange behavior have something to do with allergies? How else to explain the eczema, the congestion, the discomfort?

The pediatrician assumed a sympathetic expression and then looked at the floor.

This not looking at us was becoming familiar—our son couldn't do it, and now neither could his doctor. We left the HMO office and spent weeks trying to find a specialist with an explanation, but the doctors could offer none. Instead they recommended that we call our local early-intervention program, REACH. But we had already done so, at the suggestion of our day-care provider, whose son was mentally retarded.

Twenty years ago Massachusetts was among the first states to introduce a statewide early-intervention program, providing therapeutic "home-based" support to developmentally delayed children up to the age of three and their

families. Now, under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, all fifty states provide such services.

The director of REACH, Darleen Corbett, suspected that she knew what was wrong with Walker before she met him. In fact, she was bold enough to reveal her suspicion over the phone: sensory integration disorder, an extreme form of sensitivity. When she examined him and confirmed her suspicions, Corbett explained that the disorder tends to affect a number of systems simultaneously. A child with S.I. problems is likely to have allergies as well as heightened sensitivity to a variety of stimuli. Corbett assigned the case to Arlene Spooner, a physical therapist with training in sensory integration.

When Arlene met Walker, he wasn't at all the listless baby he had been in the doctor's office. In fact, he seemed to have swung dramatically in the opposite direction. No longer dumbstruck, he seemed electrified, a caricature of excitement. His head swung from side to side; he laughed constantly, almost maniacally; and his arms and legs moved up and down rapidly, repetitively, as if he were sprinting through the air.

Arlene sat in front of Walker and studied him with obvious alarm. We pressed her for an explanation, but she chose her words carefully. She didn't want to doom Walker before she gave him a chance. On this first visit she would only repeat, "You have a very sensitive son."

B*ut why objects?" I said to Arlene. "Why won't he look at me? It's hard not to believe he just doesn't like us."*
"Because faces have an amazing amount of information in them," she said. "Especially the eyes. Right now that's too much information for him. Right now he prefers objects."

That summer, when REACH began working with Walker, my mother came from California to take care of our then five-year-old daughter, Elizabeth. One day I took Elizabeth to swim at my mother's hotel. In the solarium I passed a tall, thin man sitting on a lounge chair next to the swimming pool. Cross-legged, stiff-backed, his arms outstretched, the man moved his hands through the air, his wrists rotating as if he were drawing circles. An hour later he was unchanged. I knew what to call his problem: autism. No one had used the term when talking about Walker, but both Darleen Corbett and Arlene Spooner had expressed alarm at the level of Walker's unrelatedness, his tendency to pull inward, the peculiar motions of his limbs.

The next day Cliff came home with the news that he had looked up "sensory integration disorder" on the Internet and found hundreds of entries—widely cross-referenced with autism. Walker's sensory problems, we felt we could reasonably conclude, were so severe that they were leading into an autistic retreat. He simply wasn't emotionally available to us.

The prefix "aut-," or "auto-," as in "auto-erotic," "auto-

immune," means "self." People with autism retreat into their own worlds and appear not to be interested in our world. But why?

More than twenty years ago A. Jean Ayres, an occupational therapist, found a key to what makes autistic people act the way they do: often they are not out of tune with this world but, ironically, far too aware of it. The world is too much with them, and because they are excruciatingly sensitive, they're forced to retreat. Thus Walker hadn't necessarily been unaware of the doctor's presence when he became distant—he was simply overstimulated. Similarly, on the day he met Darleen Corbett, she showed him a bright-red plastic apple with a broad painted face which chimed sweetly. He instantly fell asleep—to protect himself from overstimulation, she explained.

Imagine your sensory world scrambled and unregulated, your auditory intake a rock station—or worse, mere static—blasting incessantly in your ears. Imagine your kitchen light as bright as a searchlight, boring into your cornea every time you turn it on. Imagine yourself in clothes so irritating that they seem lined with metal scraping brushes. Imagine entering a restaurant and encountering fumes so overpowering to your eyes that you think the cook must be boiling Mace. This can be the world of the autistic.

Understanding the enigmatic and contradictory world of sensory dysfunction is the task of S.I. experts, most of whom initially trained as occupational therapists or physical therapists. It's also the task of parents, and it can seem like a sojourn in the world of Lewis Carroll. Some children are so auditorially sensitive that they can recount conversations that took place in the house next door. Some are so aware of smells that they can identify the one person chewing gum in a large conference hall. Understanding a child through his senses requires close detective work—intimate, hairsplitting observation—because each person's sensory challenges are unique.

"Why the light?" I asked Arlene. "Why would light be attractive to a child who's sensitive?"

"I don't know," she said. "Perhaps because it is stimulating somehow. Or perhaps because it's like a great void, a great nothingness."

"You mean it blinds him ... like snow blindness?"

"Yes, possibly," she said.

Children with S.I. problems can also be "hyposensitive," undersensitive, in one or more areas. A child may have oversensitive hearing yet be undersensitive visually. A tactilely hyposensitive child might need to throw himself against a wall just to know he exists, just to feel himself in space. Walker flailed in space because his sense of the location of his body parts and even the boundaries of his own being wasn't working well. He spent most of his energy trying to figure out where he was.

THE EPIDEMIC

Over the past ten years the number of children with autism has increased astoundingly. When I asked a local organization, Community Resources for People With Autism, for some statistics about the incidence of the disorder, I was told that a report merely three months old would be out of date. California, reflecting a national trend, reported 3,864 cases in 1987 and 11,995 in 1998—a 210 percent increase in a decade. Estimates for the current incidence nationwide vary from one in 500 people to one in 150.

Most experts now agree that autism has a genetic component, but genetics represents only a piece of the puzzle. Some researchers speculate that genetic propensity may work in concert with environmental causes. The possibility that toxins from pesticides, other chemicals, or vaccines may be culprits has been vigorously debated. (Mercury, a neurotoxin, was found in the past few years to be in vaccines in excess of EPA recommendations; vaccine manufacturers recently discontinued its use.) One theory proposes that food sensitivities may be responsible.

A partial explanation for the rise in the incidence is that the very definition of autism is expanding. In 1943, when the term was coined, the disorder was viewed as an intractable mental disease, largely untreatable, a cousin to schizophrenia. Our understanding is being recast. Each time the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* (now in its fourth edition) is revised, the scope of autism broadens. In common and clinical language, "autism spectrum disorder" encompasses everything from autism in its most extreme form (sometimes called "full-blown" or "classical" autism) to less severe forms such as pervasive development disorder and Asperger's syndrome. Some people put attention deficit disorder and other learning disorders in the spectrum. One school of thought sees autism as a personality type—the cliché of the classic "engineer": highly intelligent, highly visual, mechanically oriented, associative, relatively unskilled verbally and socially.

At the far end of the spectrum are people dwelling in a Dantean nightmare. They exist among us but not with us, having no meaningful speech or even language comprehension; theirs is a world of objects rather than people. They may bite themselves or others, scream out for no apparent reason, have uncontrollable tantrums, thrash, bang their heads against walls, act as though in a trance, rock back and forth, or wave their hands in mysterious patterns. The worst cases involve severe mental retardation. Even in less severe circumstances autistic children may refuse or be unable to look at others, or may repeat phrases from Disney movies, for example, or fragments of commercials, without seeming to know what they've said. Autistic people may engage in

obsessive behaviors, focusing on one thing and refusing to let it out of their sight: they may stare at a stain on a rug and rub it incessantly. Some such people must be institutionalized, or watched constantly by an aide, to be saved from themselves. A volunteer who helped us with our son told me that for an entire summer she had worked with an autistic man who lived in a residential hospital and engaged in one activity alone: he hit his ears from behind, slapping at them with both his hands.

"That was my whole job," she said. "All summer ... trying to keep him from doing it, and he never stopped. That's all he did."

"Why didn't you just let him do it?" I asked naively.

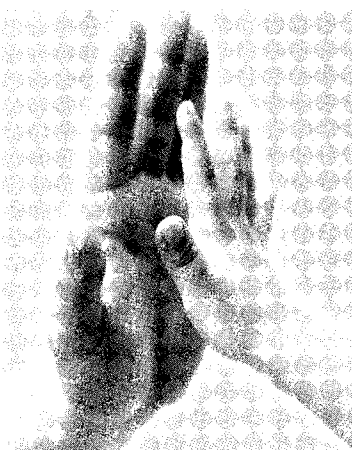
"He would have bled to death."

Thirty years ago something happened in Los Angeles that changed the landscape of autism forever. Ivar Lovaas, a professor of psychology at the University of California at Los Angeles, began experimenting with behavior-modification techniques on children with autism. In 1987 he published a landmark study, showing that devastating symptoms of autism could be ameliorated and even reversed in some children.

For his study Lovaas separated thirty-eight autistic children of preschool age into two groups of nineteen. The first group was given an average of forty hours a week of intensive behavioral intervention called applied behavioral analysis. The intervention involved extremely repetitive exercises. The children sat in chairs and received requests: "Put this cube in a bucket," for example. A child who reacted appropriately was rewarded—with a cookie, perhaps, or praise. For children who did not react appropriately the request was repeated, again and again. Lovaas theorized that a child participating in a constant series of these exchanges, called discrete trials, would, by the laws of behaviorism, adopt more socially correct behaviors, which would be consistently reinforced.

Lovaas's results were unprecedented; for the first time, someone in the scientific community had proved that autism was treatable. The children who received intensive intervention enjoyed an average increase in IQ of thirty points. Nine of the nineteen children went on to attend regular first grade. The second group of children in the study, who received merely five to ten hours a week of behavioral therapy, reacted as if they hadn't been treated at all: not one was eventually placed in a regular class or showed an increase in IQ.

Some parent groups are critical of Lovaas, because in the years prior to publication of his 1987 study he recommended aversive techniques—spanking, showing anger, looking away, yelling—as means of coercing children to behave differently. But a representative of the Lovaas Institute



for Early Intervention explained to me, "His techniques have been evolving for thirty years. Lovaas has found more-effective means of positive reinforcement, has eliminated aversive techniques, and has added a social component to his program: play groups and play dates supervised by facilitators." Not everyone agrees, however, that using applied behavioral analysis is the best or most advanced way to treat autism or that Lovaas's standards for measuring improved functioning are high enough. In fact, his critics argue that his program does not sufficiently work on or test for a number of the hallmarks of autism—significant impairments in emotional intimacy, empathy, and creative and abstract thinking.

CIRCLES OF COMMUNICATION

The goal with Walker was to attune his senses, to one another and to an overwhelming world—not just so that he would be a happier baby but so that he might be able to resist the sirens that beckoned him inward. From the time she began working with Walker, Arlene Spooner made clear what was at stake: If Walker couldn't maintain his focus on the external world, he would not be able to learn. Her therapy wasn't certain to reach him, but she was eager to try. After working with Walker for two months, Arlene brought in Dawn Smith, a colleague at REACH who is also a specialist in autism.

Walker was an unusual case. Dawn had seen many toddlers—and, indeed, adults—with the symptoms of autism, but she had never before seen such behavior in a child this young. Usually autism becomes apparent when the speech and social skills that usually appear at eighteen months to two years are slow to develop. One of the major forms of autism shows a regressive pattern—seemingly typical children might begin to lose words they have already learned to speak. Dawn knew from the research that a significant percentage of autistic children show symptoms from birth. But parents may not know something is wrong—or find useful help—until the disorder is advanced. She later explained to me that, remarkably, pediatricians in America are often not adequately trained to screen for the disorder. Dawn had believed for a long time that the description of autism appearing in the *DSM-IV* applied only to more-advanced stages. Still, whatever one called Walker's problem, she thought he would receive the diagnosis of autism within a year if we didn't act, and act quickly. Although she used a few behavioral techniques in special circumstances, Dawn had serious reservations about using a behavioral approach; it didn't address the crucial issue of emotional development. By a fortunate coincidence Dawn was primed to try something new in her practice. Just three months before she met Walker, she had read an article by Stanley Greenspan and his colleague Serena Wieder, in the journal *Zero to Three*, outlining an effective new approach for treating toddlers and babies with symptoms of autism.

Later she found a chart review of Greenspan's patients. The results struck me as astoundingly positive. Greenspan had been able to help more than 50 percent of his 200 patients to become fully functioning children—warm, engaged, interactive, verbal, and creative. Another 30 percent made substantial progress. He helped children to reach these unexpected levels of functioning using a comprehensive program including occupational therapy, speech therapy, and what he called "floor time." The therapy required that a child be reacting to his parents or therapists in what Greenspan called "circles of communication." A circle would be started if someone tried to engage the child and completed if that someone received a response. Smile and the baby smiles back: one circle. Hand a toy to the baby and the baby hands it back: another circle.

I called Greenspan, who, though notoriously difficult to see, was eager to work with Walker because Walker was so young. Two months later we flew down to Bethesda, Maryland, on short notice and met with Greenspan in his home office, a large, comfortable room with old chairs and couches, stacked with papers and books and littered with toys.

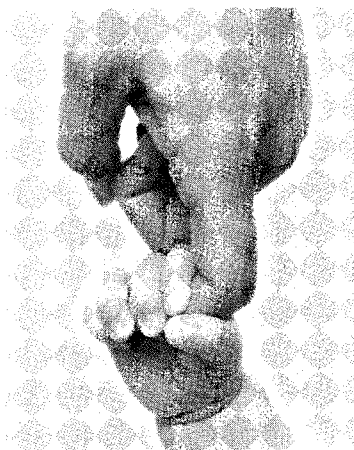
Greenspan, a child psychiatrist specializing in early development, had spent sixteen years at the National Institute of Mental Health, and his studies led to a new philosophy of emotional development—for which he won the Ittleson Award, the American Psychiatric Association's highest honor for research in child psychiatry. In his years at the NIMH, Greenspan developed sophisticated criteria for understanding and defining emotional maturity and began to map out its phases. He applied recent research about how babies and toddlers "process" the vast amount of sensory information available to them each day. On the basis of his insights Greenspan designed a therapeutic model to help children with a variety of problems. He called it D.I.R. (developmental, individual-difference, relationship-based model) or, informally, "floor time" and made the approach available to the public in his book *The Child With Special Needs* (1998). Floor time required parental involvement. Though it emphasized relationship, fun, joy, the method drew its power from parents' ability to entice an impaired child to perform at increasingly higher levels of attention, cognition, and motor functioning—far higher than that child would normally be disposed to. It was tailored to a child's particular deficits and strengths and designed to grow in scope as the child climbed the developmental ladder.

The important question for Greenspan, however, was how high could an impaired child climb? In recent years Greenspan and his associates discovered something peculiar. They could teach autistic children certain cognitive and living skills through an intensive regime, as Lovaas had, but for some reason the children became stuck when they were asked to do anything imaginative or conceptually abstract. Even autistic children who were geniuses at mathematics and music had difficulty making certain simple connections

between their reality and the world of abstractions. Psychologists and researchers noted a similar problem with social development: autistic children could not wrap their minds around the idea that other people have feelings and make judgments. Often autistic people can't feel sympathy for others and have no understanding of others' thought processes. At an early age, when most children are detecting how the minds of their parents and peers work, scheming to get what they want out of their social environment, many autistic children can't understand the simplest pun or detect the simplest lie, though some might be able to calculate in a matter of seconds how many of their birthdays will fall on a Tuesday. They seem hopelessly mired in the literal.

Psychologists and researchers in autism have coined the term "theory of mind" to describe the ability to understand how other people reason as they do. Greenspan and his associates asked themselves, Why do many autistic people lack theory of mind? And why can't autistic children make the leap into abstraction? From a traditional developmental point of view, there was no reason to assume that autistic children would have trouble conceptualizing abstractions. The pioneering Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget had persuasively argued long ago that abstractions are grasped when a child operates on his environment (he pulls a string, and a bell rings: causality). But Greenspan was convinced that some mechanism must be missing in an autistic baby's mind. What was it? The answer was staring him right in the face. Or, rather, the answer was in all those young faces that simply couldn't look him in the eye.

Greenspan and his colleagues made a leap: these children, they suddenly realized, wouldn't understand abstractions *until they understood their own emotions*. Already celebrated for his work in developmental psychiatry, Greenspan had, by observing the dysfunction of autistic children, come to a turning point in his understanding of human cognitive development. He understood that everything a child does and thinks as he is developing he does largely because of his emotions. Children apply to the physical world what they have already learned emotionally; they are not, as Piaget thought, introduced to abstractions by the physical world. "The first lesson in causality," Greenspan says, "is not in pulling the string to ring the bell. The first lesson in causality happens months earlier—pulling your mother's heartstrings with a smile in order to receive one back." Furthermore, he says, the earliest concepts of math are nothing but reasoning driven by emotion. "For instance, when a child is learning concepts of quantity, he doesn't understand *conceptually*, he understands *emotionally*, in terms of his affective universe. What is 'a lot' to a toddler? It's more than you expect. What is 'a little'? It's less than you want."



First we "get it" from our personal experience, and then we make connections, conceptualizing abstractions. What was missing from the autistic child's experience was a clear understanding of himself—a connection among feelings, actions, and ideas. He couldn't make the intuitive leap into a conceptual world beyond himself because he didn't "get" himself.

Although autism is a biological disorder, the path to combating it was clear to Greenspan: A therapist alone couldn't teach an autistic child to come out of his world; the parents (or someone else with an emotional connection to the child) would have to be involved. The foundation of cognitive development would need to be laid at home. This emphasis on emotional development separated Greenspan dramatically from the behaviorist tradition in treating autism. He argued that the brain and the mind could be developed only by "wooing"—enticing the child into an emotional relationship.

Though Greenspan's floor time and Lovaas's behavior modification are two of the major therapeutic models funded by many states, the latter is by far the most prevalent and was for many years the only method; some school systems insist that it's the single proven technique. Recently, however, a number of schools and institutions, recognizing the importance of Greenspan's emphasis on emotional development and acknowledging that his success rate is comparable to or even better than Lovaas's, have created their own programs to combine the techniques.

Of the ten Department of Public Health-approved "specialty service providers" (programs for children up to three and sometimes five years of age) available in Massachusetts, for instance, two use floor time as their primary approach, four use only behavior modification, and four use a combination. Behavior modification conditions through principles of systematic reinforcement; Greenspan's model seeks to change the underlying causes of behavior. No definitive proof exists in favor of either. Neither method has yet been studied on a truly representative population in a clinical trial, nor has either been compared with the other, though such studies are planned.

When we met with Stanley Greenspan at his Bethesda office, he reviewed our history and then used a video camera to film Cliff and me as we played individually with Walker for about fifteen minutes each. After reviewing the tapes he instructed us to get back on the floor and try again. This time, still behind the camera, he called out orders, telling us we should work harder and faster and be more engaging, more intimate. "No, no, no ... now you've lost him." When we'd finally captured our son's attention for longer periods, he'd yell out, "Now you're cookin'!"

Greenspan was re-educating us in the science of Walker, who was then eleven months old. We had already made some strides using floor time at home. We'd won eye contact from Walker, and he was becoming more used to light, more used to interaction, though only in fleeting doses. Still, Greenspan was insistent that we change our attitude. He revealed the ways in which we showed him—and Walker—that we had diminished expectations for our son's performance. "Let him control his own body," he'd insist from behind the camera. "Let him move—don't do the work for him."

The evening after the appointment Cliff and I were sitting in a restaurant with Walker. Greenspan had told us that we would need to make Walker work for what he wanted—that every desire would need to be satisfied through human interaction. ("You must become the button that makes anything he wants happen.") "I'll give you this cup," I said, "if you squeeze my finger." Walker didn't react. We weren't sure he was even intelligent enough to understand. I said it again. The boy who had previously never responded to a purely verbal request put his hand up to mine and squeezed.

Doing floor time, I often felt I was performing a desperate sort of stand-up comedy to save my son's life. Not only were the sessions exhausting—we found ourselves clapping, jumping up and down, making up songs, egging Walker on to move or to knock down blocks—but floor time required that our voices be ever livelier, the games more enticing, the joking more exaggerated. Our energy and focus had to be at the highest levels possible. Children like Walker, we understood, are inclined to recede to an internal landscape that is far more seductive than the "real" world. Greenspan asserted that we must not only maintain Walker's attention but also actually help to "build" Walker, or help him to build himself—block by block, so to speak, through each phase of development, physical and emotional. "You're trying to lay new pathways in your son's mind," he said.

Laying new pathways in the mind takes manpower—far more, we soon realized, than a family can provide. Greenspan wanted us to do ten sessions a day of twenty to thirty minutes each. We told Darleen Corbett that we needed as much time as possible from Dawn and Arlene. In a decision unprecedented at REACH, Corbett found funds through the Massachusetts Department of Public Health to pay a tutor for ten hours a week. She also gave us more of Dawn and Arlene's time: a total of four hours a week each. Their help was crucial.

During her sessions Dawn worked to help Walker understand his social and cognitive relationship with the world. She encouraged him to look at himself in a mirror when he played with her. She warned us against being too focused on what she called "splinter skills"—small milestones, such as stacking blocks, that in other therapies often become goals in themselves. Working in a constantly interactive environment, we were actually teaching Walker how to learn. "If he can learn how to learn, then he can learn anything," Dawn said.

Exhausted, we brought in a volunteer, Amy, a Smith College student. Amy was interested in working with Walker on language acquisition. She knew that Walker might never speak, but she was eager to try to help. She showed up five afternoons a week to sit with Walker at his high chair, enticing him to show what he wanted to eat and when he wanted to stop. She began by teaching pre-verbal gestures, which had been shown to help speed language acquisition in typical children.

It was a time of shedding old ideas. Doing floor time, I was learning about brain development, the very foundation of intelligence. I had studied Western civilization in college, and had mistakenly believed that the body was somehow inferior to the mind. Now I quickly came to understand that the brain depends on the body for its breadth of knowledge. By moving through space we integrate with the world; by declaring ourselves creatures in it, we come to know it. Movement also stimulates brain function. Time and again Arlene went straight to Walker's body, focusing on movement as a way of helping stimulate the nerve impulses that build mental pathways. For example, when Walker was grabbing toys, she would often encourage him to reach not just forward but across—"crossing mid-line," she called it.

"What's so important about crossing mid-line?" I asked.

"It connects the two parts of his brain, left and right," Arlene told me. "If he can reach across his body, he'll better be able to conceptualize an angled line, or a triangle, or one day draw an X, because he's already drawn one with his body."

One day, when Walker was nearly a year old, Dawn and Arlene and I were all on the floor with him. We had taught him to crawl at about ten months, but he still couldn't sit up by himself (a skill his peers had mastered at six months). Seeing that he was trying to make his way up, we cheered him on. He succeeded—vertical on his own for the first time. We all clapped. This primarily physical leap spurred a social one as well—he looked from Dawn to me to Arlene as if to say, "Hey, you guys, did you see me?"

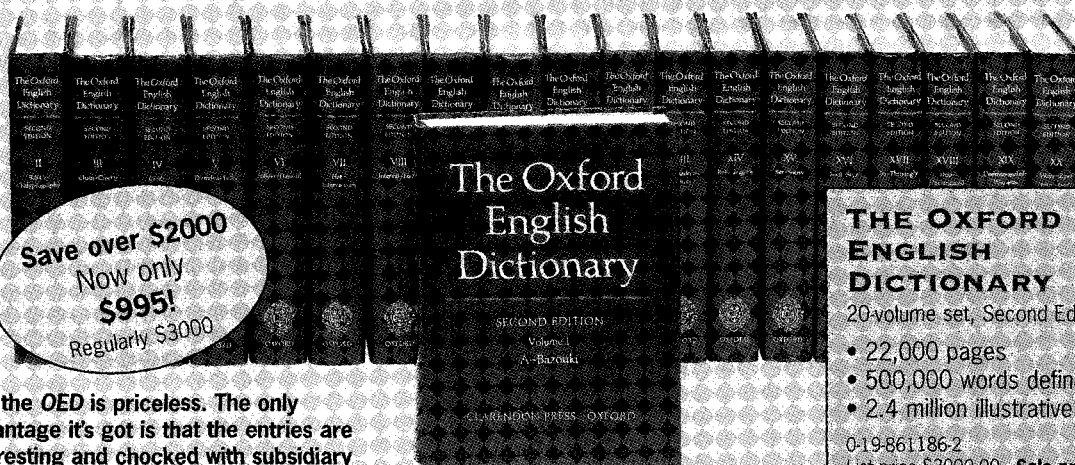
"Look what he just did!" Arlene exclaimed. "He looked from one of us to the other and back again. He's never done that before!" Walker had read and acted on our emotional cues in a sophisticated way. A few weeks later he began to verbalize: "Hambulah!" "Hambulah!"

In June of 1998, when Walker was twenty months old, we revisited Greenspan's office. Walker had learned to walk the month before, but Greenspan was after bigger gains. He asked Walker to find a large toy we had "hidden" under a rug in the office. Walker couldn't find it. Greenspan explained that this failure indicated that Walker's visual-spatial reasoning wasn't fully developed. We spent the next nine months playing hiding games with Walker. For a year after that we focused on games involving imagination—to my surprise, a crucial cognitive building block. It is the screen,

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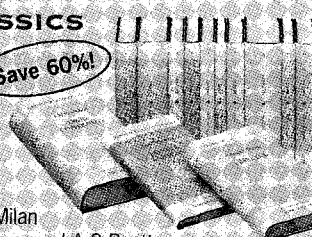
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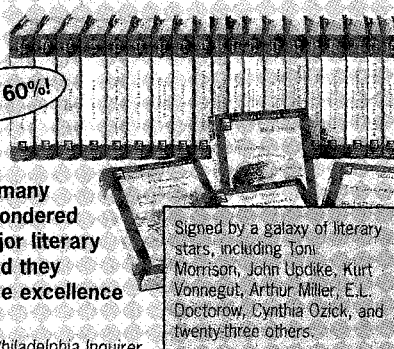
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Greenspan had explained, on which the mind begins to project possibilities beyond what is. Our aim was to build the foundation for higher reasoning.

The results of Greenspan's intensive interactive therapy were staggering. Each time Walker was tested at REACH, at six-month assessments for social and physical maturity, he had attained higher levels of development. Though we flattered ourselves that we were like Professor Henry Higgins, Walker, like Eliza Doolittle, mocked our illusions of control, becoming more and more the person he wanted to be. He exhibited a sense of humor. His expressiveness grew, as did all his motor skills. Emotion bloomed on his face. He laughed during our games, toyed with us, made up his own ways of playing.

On the day Walker was scheduled to receive his three-year-old assessment at REACH, six adults—Dawn, Arlene, Jean (a speech therapist), Walker's prospective preschool teacher, Cliff, and I—congregated around him in a small clinical testing room. Cliff held the video camera. Each of the therapists put herself in front of Walker to test him in her area of expertise. Dawn and Arlene would be using the Michigan Early Intervention Developmental Profile. Dawn presented puzzles and diagrams and toys to test cognitive ability. Arlene asked Walker to jump, to draw, to stack blocks. Jean used the Preschool Language Scale to test both receptive and expressive language. She put a large book on the table in front of Walker and showed him pictures. Each page of the book contained exercises matched to increasing levels of skill. She asked Walker to repeat a string of words. He did so, beaming proudly. She pointed to a picture of a bicycle, a broom, scissors. "Which do you ride?" "Which do you cut with?" He passed the three-year-old mark. She turned a few pages. He passed the three-and-a-half-year-old mark, while flirting with his examiner. She turned some more. A three-year-old who might never have spoken had acquired the language proficiency of a child close to four years old. But when Arlene had asked him to jump, he couldn't.

Nine months later, after receiving physical therapy at school for increasingly subtle problems, Walker could jump and run, though perhaps not as vigorously as most children. He could cut paper with scissors and do particularly well-aimed and sneaky things with a squirt gun.

Walker still suffers from allergies and from occasional gastrointestinal difficulties. At times he is an overly sensitive child; in his first year of preschool he was frightened by loud lawnmowers; now, two years later, he's inured to them, and can spend hours happily in a noisy arcade. But he is sensitive in positive ways as well. I would argue that his therapy, or perhaps some inherent gift related to his sensitivity, has afforded him a high degree of emotional intelligence—ironic, given his early patterns.

At three and a half years old, Walker came into the kitchen holding the beige-plastic body of Mr. Potato Head puppet-style.

"Hi!" he said in a high, squeaky voice. "I'm Mr. Potato Head. Actually, no," he corrected himself, still in the potato voice. "I'm not Mr. Potato Head ... I'm Mr. Nobody."

"Why Mr. Nobody?" I asked.

He showed me the body. It was blank. "Because I have no eyes, no nose or a mouth. I'm sad and lonely."

"Why are you sad?" I said.

"I want my whole self."

"Then you'll be happy?"

"Yes," he said.

Perhaps most important of all, Walker has a deep sense of empathy. When his great aunt died, more than a year ago, he worried most that her surviving sister would be lonely. How often are typical four-year-old boys able to put themselves in someone else's place?

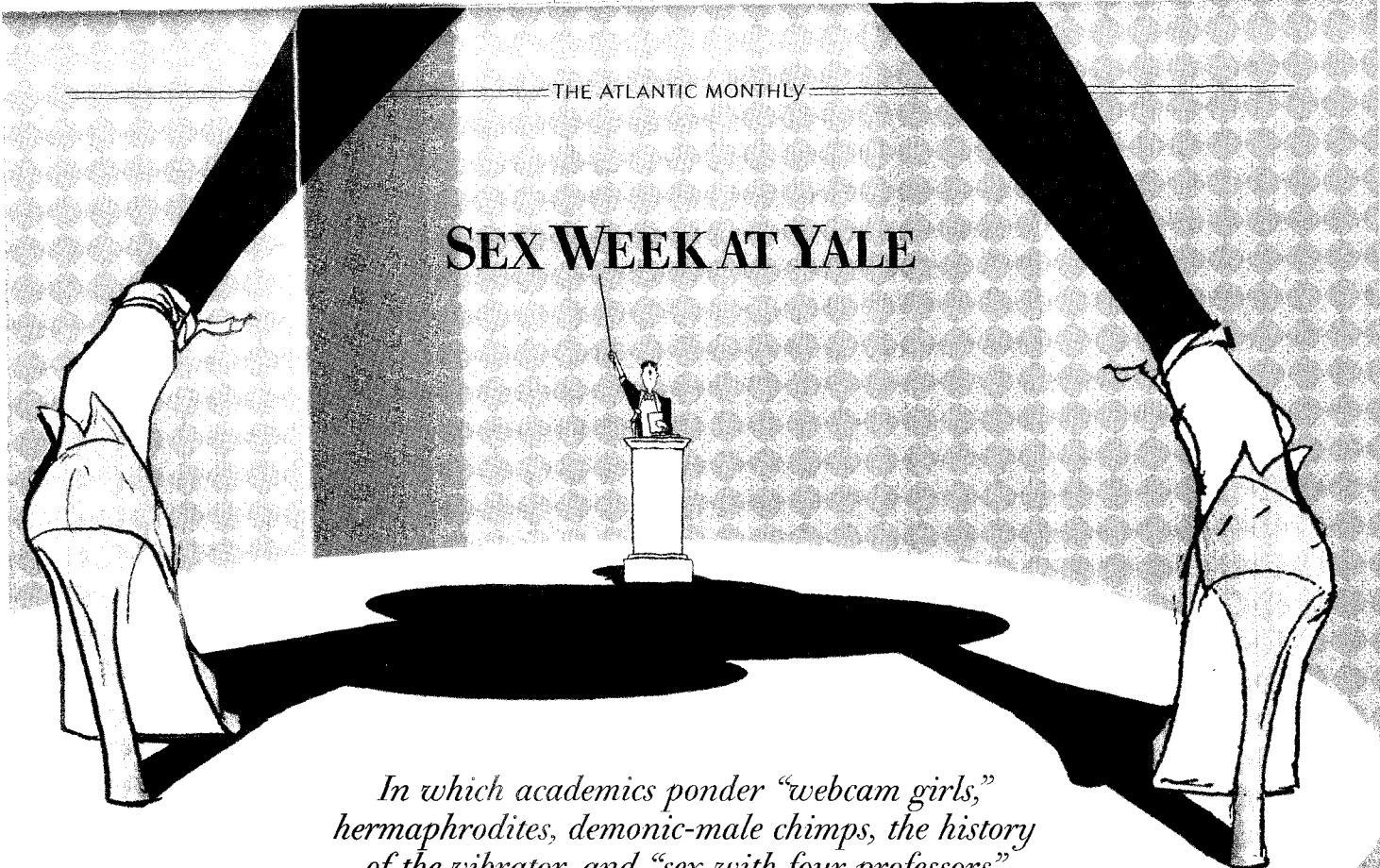
In May of 2000, when Walker was three years and seven months old, Greenspan filmed us playing and working with our son. In the past he had usually filmed us twice, correcting our floor-time method during the second round. This time he filmed us once, turned off his video camera, and sent Walker out of the room. He told us that Walker was doing wonderfully by any standards. "He's intelligent, a great problem solver, creative thinker, has a can-do attitude. More important, he's got that spark in his eye. You don't see the average kid looking this wonderful." Far from being self-absorbed, repetitive, or stereotypical, Walker has now emerged among his peers as one of the most engaged, warm, and intelligent. Walker is now a kindergartner. His teacher has said that she thinks of him as "a typical child" and "very bright," though she admits he occasionally has his unruly moments. Most important is his social development; people at school see him as friendly and animated.

That day in Greenspan's office we began talking about child-rearing in general. "It's great when parents spend time with their kids," he said.

Great when parents spend time with their kids? I would have slugged the man if I hadn't been so grateful.

In his *The Phenomenology of Mind*, Hegel asserted something fundamental about self-awareness: "Self-consciousness exists ... in that, and by the fact that it exists for another self-consciousness." We can be complete, conscious beings only when we have known ourselves through the eyes of another. To call this process the healing power of love would be sentimental—especially since in Walker's case so much pragmatic, unsentimental energy and work was involved in overcoming biological obstacles and forming a relationship. Still, early human interaction is the starting point of all knowledge. How important it is, then, to teach a highly sensitive child to bear the often unbearable light of another person's gaze. ▀

Patricia Stacey lives in western Massachusetts. She is at work on a memoir, The Boy Who Loved Windows, to be released in the fall of this year.


 An illustration at the top of the page depicts a tiny male figure, presumably a professor, standing on a small white podium. He is holding a pointer stick. He is positioned between two enormous, black high-heeled shoes that dominate the left and right sides of the frame. The background is a light, textured surface with a dark, irregular shadow cast by the podium and the professor.

SEX WEEK AT YALE

In which academics ponder "webcam girls," hermaphrodites, demonic-male chimps, the history of the vibrator, and "sex with four professors"

BY RON ROSENBAUM

Illustrations by Istvan Banyai

Call me Is-male. You've probably heard about my distant ancestor Ishmael, and the way that when he felt the chill of a "damp, drizzly November" in his soul, he took to following coffins in funeral processions. When Is-male feels a chill in his romantic life, he does something similarly funereal: he tries to give the whole thing the long good-bye. After all, Is-male reasons, he's had more than his fair share of exhilarating encounters—a marriage here, a divorce there—and more than his fair share of misery and heartbreak as well. Why not just draw a line under it, call it done? Style himself after the romantically embittered and disillusioned Graham Greene heroes who trudge off to leper colonies to lose their worldly desires? But Is-male has tried variants of this before, and there has always been some backsliding. He's been looking for something that will put the final nail in the coffin. And then, as if in answer to a prayer, he heard about Sex Week at Yale.

There's nothing like the prospect of a week of academic theorizing about sex and love to make you want to give it all up. And that's *exactly* what I was hoping for when I heard about Sex Week at Yale—lots of theory, lots of abstraction, lots of intellectual distance.

I heard about Sex Week last year in the following press release, forwarded to me by e-mail:

I'm coordinating a huge event for Yale University which is titled "Campus-Wide Sex Week." Four organizations are organizing the event: Yale Hillel, Peer Health Educators, the Women's Center, and the Yale Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual Cooperative ...

*The week involves a faculty lecture series with topics such as transgender issues: where does one gender end and the other begin, the history of romance, and the history of the vibrator. Student talks on the secrets of great sex, hooking up, and how to be a better lover and a student panel on abstinence. A Valentine's Dinner at the Jewish Center with an afro/cuban band and a debate after the dinner between Rabbi Shmuley Boteach (author of *Kosher Sex*) and Dr. Judy Kuriansky (radio show host of [Love Phones] and author of [The Complete Idiot's Guide to Tantric Sex]). A faculty panel on sex in college with four professors. a movie film festival (sex fest 2002) and a concert with local bands and yale bands. and lastly, a celebrity panel with Al Goldstein (screw magazine), Dr. Gilda Carle (sex therapist), Nancy Slotnick (Harvard graduate and owner/operator of the Drip Cafe in NYC), and lastly Dr. Susan Block [also a sex-therapist radio host, and a Yale graduate].*

The event is going to be huge and all of campus is going to be involved ...

One of my first thoughts on reading this was that before Yale (my beloved alma mater) had a Sex Week it ought to institute a gala Grammar and Spelling Week. In addition to "abstinence" (unless it was a deliberate mistake in order to imply that "Yale puts the stain in abstinence") there was that intriguing "faculty panel on sex in college with four professors," whose syntax makes it sound more illicit than it was probably intended to be.

But the academic lectures on sex and romance seemed to promise *just* the aversion therapy I was seeking. I know, from keeping up with trendy literary theory, that the more ostensibly "sexual" most academic theorists get, the further from actual sex they get. Thus the disciples of the Parisian postmodern post-Freudian theorist Jacques Lacan are always going on about "desire" and "the body," but one never feels the remotest presence of desire or the body in their thinking. Listening to academics going on about desire is a profound anti-aphrodisiac treasure for those of us seeking surcease from worldly temptations.

DAY ONE: THE MEDICALIZATION OF SEX

My train arrived in New Haven an hour or so before the first scheduled lecture (on "intersex" issues), which gave me a chance to take a nostalgic sex-scandal tour of the Yale campus and wonder, What the hell is it with Yale and sex?

I first passed the Tomb of Skull and Bones, the legendary secret society that made a ritual of sexual confessions—when not ruling the world, planning the Kennedy assassination, and the like. Seriously, as I once reported, the distinctive element of the Skull and Bones bonding ritual (which two Presidents named Bush took part in) is the sexual confessional session, in which each of the initiates must devote one evening to sharing with the other fourteen initiates a detailed history of his sex life. Whether or not they once lay naked in a coffin while talking about sex has not been definitively established. But nudity does figure in another remarkable Yale scandal, one in which I was both exposed and exposer, so to speak, which took place a few blocks north of Skull and Bones, at the Payne Whitney Gymnasium.

This was "The Great Ivy League Nude Posture-Photo Scandal." Yale was not alone in being victimized by the posture-photo scandal: just about every Ivy League and Seven Sisters school from the 1930s to the 1960s was inveigled into allowing photos of nude or lingerie-clad freshmen to be taken and then transferred to the "research archives" of a megalomaniac pseudo-scientist, W. H. Sheldon. Sheldon believed that the secret of all human character and fate could be reduced to a three-digit number derived from various "postural relationships" (the photos were taken with metal pins affixed to the spine to define the arc of curvature). I was the reporter who discovered, in 1995, that all these nude photos of America's elite—tens of thousands of them, anyway—were available for viewing by "qualified researchers" in an obscure archive of the Smithsonian Institution.

I don't know if this can be classified as a sex scandal, exactly, but it demonstrates the tendency of a certain strain of academic to find a way to abstract from an actual body to a body of mathematical relationships—to pure number rather than impure flesh, if possible.

But to guard against bias during Sex Week at Yale, I made a point of acquiring, confidentially, lecture notes for Harvard's core-curriculum sex course, in order to compare what two of the nation's pre-eminent schools teach their students about the birds and the bees.

The official title of Harvard's sex course is "Science B-29: Evolution of Human Nature." But according to an impeccable source (a recent graduate), "Everyone just called it 'Sex,' and people would make little jokes to the effect of 'I have Sex right before lunch on Tuesdays and Thursdays.'" That Crimson sense of humor!

Actually, that's unfair. Thumbing through the Harvard course notes on the train to New Haven, I came upon a number of funny, flip remarks by the notetaker about the lecturer's solemn pronouncements on the roots of all human sexual behavior. It seems that Harvard's sex course takes a very strict sociobiological, selfish-gene, evolutionary-psychological, chimp-focused view of human nature—one

in which culture and nurture take a back seat to genetics, to millions of years of ingrained *primate* nature. The main variations admitted to exist in human sexual behavior, the chief alternate paths, are based on chimp models. There are the very bad chimpanzees, with their patriarchal “demonic males,” and the very good “gentle apes”—the bonobos, pygmy chimps whose females rule. The bonobos have a lot of recreational sex, whereas violence prevails among the demonic males of certain larger primate species. As the Harvard note-taker put it, “So basically Bonobos are a species of female dominated sex freaks. Cool.”

The *New York Times* columnist Maureen Dowd once put forward the lovable, sex-positive, violence-averse bonobos as her role models for contemporary society. Interesting: as it turned out, not one of the academic lecturers at Yale’s Sex Week had *anything* to say about primates or selfish genes, although on the last day—during the “celebrity panel”—Susan Block, the California sex-advice celebrity, did bring up the bonobos. But in general it could be said that Harvard and Yale were acting out the old nature-versus-nurture split on the nature and nurture of sexuality. For Harvard, your gender behaviors were ruled by your chimp genes. Yale downplayed genetic determinism in favor of cultural contingency: gender identity was up to *you*.

This was certainly the theme of the first academic lecture of Sex Week. At the designated time, I was the only person in attendance (aside from the lecturer) in the designated room, in Yale’s mock-Gothic William L. Harkness Hall. Perhaps it was the title—“The Anatomies of Sex: Theme and Variation”—and the advertised focus on “intersex issues” and hermaphroditism that kept the lecture from being big box office. Suddenly I wondered if Sex Week itself had been a hoax. But then a second person arrived: a fresh-faced young woman bearing a heavily laden backpack, which she set down with relief on the armrest of a chair in the row ahead of me. It soon became apparent what was bulking it up.

“I remembered to bring the sixty-dollar vibrator,” she told me, after introducing herself as one of the “peer health educators”—undergraduates who would be leading a seminar and workshop titled “Secrets of Great Sex” for fellow undergraduates after this lecture. She gestured at the vibrator—an anatomically shaped pink latex contraption

whose packaging identified it as “The Wascally Wabbit” and whose catchy name appeared to derive from a kind of bunny-ear-shaped attachment.

At this point the lecturer, Professor William Summers, who had been fiddling with his projector apparatus at the front of the classroom, wandered back to greet the peer health educator. Apparently he had attended one of her sex-enhancement seminars, because he spoke enthusiastically about how much he had learned from it.

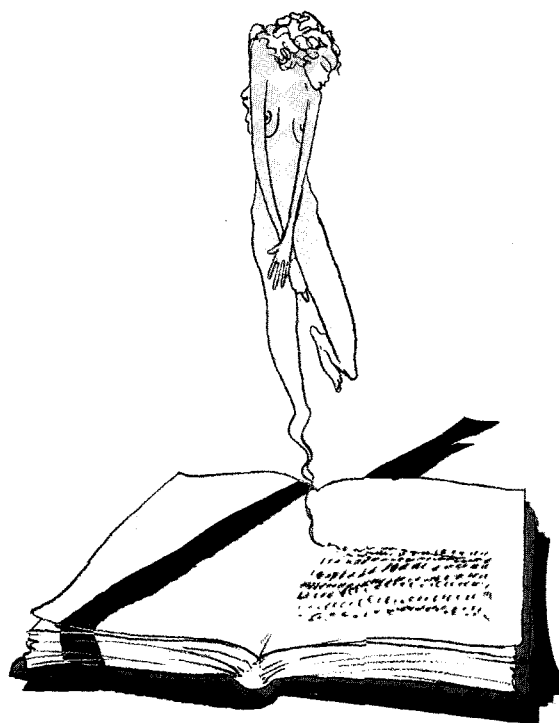
What I gathered from Professor Summers’s lecture was that he is of the school that emphasizes deconstructing the “binary opposition” of male versus female and demonstrating that gender is not some immutable “essence” but a continuum—physiologically, culturally, and psychologically. For the Yale continuum school, the spotlight is on the interzone of “intersex” people, as well as transsexuals and transvestites, because they demonstrate that the binary view of gender is false. Of course, you could also say that the exceptions prove the rule—the intersexual anomalies remind us of the binary poles—but at Yale they don’t: the exceptions *are* the rule.

Enter the hermaphrodites. One *could* say that the sexual theorists of the intersex school, with their close focus on the genitals of hermaphrodites (or, as some prefer to be called, intersexuals), are allowing the tail to wag the dog. In the past the orthodox wisdom about those who were born hermaphrodites was that they should be surgically “corrected” and assigned a single sexual identity.

Now, it seems, hermaphrodites are demanding that they be viewed as normal, just another point on the continuum.

Anyway, such was the theme of *Hermaphrodites Speak!*, the first documentary about hermaphrodites made *by* hermaphrodites, “filmed at an intersex retreat”—a film shown by Professor Summers after he treated us to huge blowups of hermaphroditic genitals at all stages of growth. Much of the film consisted of a half dozen or so hermaphrodites sitting around a picnic blanket in a rustic setting sharing their feelings, describing the struggle for self-esteem and their not-so-residual anger at the surgeons who tried to use a scalpel to “correct” them into a single sex. One was talking in bitter tones about his/her desire to take “a dull rusty knife” to the genitals of his/her surgeon. It was at about this time that the “Jazz on Film” contretemps developed.

This is how it happened: Professor Summers hadn’t



been able to get his PowerPoint software—with which he was to project images from his laptop onto the lecture-hall screen—to work in the originally designated lecture room. Tech help from the crack Yale audio-visual squad had been summoned, and it was determined that the problem was not in Professor Summers's equipment but in the tech infrastructure of that lecture room. A mass shift was made to another classroom. Well, "mass shift" is a bit of an exaggeration: you could still count the number who had finally showed up on the fingers of one hand.

Everything was proceeding smoothly in the new lecture hall, which had been empty at the time of the move, until a half hour or so into the intersex presentation, when students began drifting in expecting a previously scheduled seminar in that room: "Jazz on Film." I could tell as they came in and took seats that they were trying to reconcile what they expected to see onscreen (Mingus and Monk, maybe, talking about the history of bebop) with what they were actually seeing—slides of hermaphroditic genitals, including "ovo-testes," and then *Hermaphrodites Speak!* There was a bit of cognitive dissonance to be resolved. I suppose that, in a way, the whole intersex/hermaphrodite phenomenon could be considered Nature's jazz—not defect but improvisation.

In any case, after some of the "Jazz on Film" students began to realize that this was, well, something else again, an agreement was reached that the intersex lecture would move on, like a gypsy, to yet another classroom, for those who wanted not to miss the last half of *Hermaphrodites Speak!*

I must admit I gave it a pass: I had just enough time to catch the next train back to New York, satisfied that the first day of Sex Week at Yale had exceeded my aversion-therapy expectations.

DAY TWO: THE MATERIALIST ANTHROPOLOGY OF LOVE AND SEX

The second faculty lecture of Sex Week was titled "The History and Theory of Romantic Love in European Culture." At first it seemed to me that Professor Linda-Anne Rebhun's perspective was more down-to-earth than that of Professor Summers, whose lecture was shot through with academic ideology. Down-to-earth even if it was a remote part of the earth. Rebhun is an anthropologist specializing in the effects of urbanization on those folk in Brazil who have left traditional life in rural villages for the cities and are adjusting their notions of sex, romance, and marriage to their new environment.

Although her Brazilian field notes might not seem at first to have a direct bearing on "The History and Theory of Romantic Love in European Culture," the implicit thesis was that something akin to the sudden adoption of the notion of romantic love, which occurred centuries ago in European culture, could be glimpsed going on right now in real time

with a set of newly urbanized, newly middle-class types in Brazil. It fit in with a currently fashionable academic mode of thinking that I recently saw referred to as "inventionism."

Inventionism has been rife in the study of romance ever since C. S. Lewis declared in *The Allegory of Love* that romantic love *did not exist* until it was "invented" by the poets known as troubadours in eleventh-century Provence, who created the rituals and rules of courtly love and embodied them in their poems; it was, in effect, the poems that *created* love. Love was a literary convention that became an emotion. I've never understood how a scholar of Lewis's erudition could believe such nonsense—particularly a scholar who had read Catullus' tormented love lyrics, written a thousand years before the Provençal troubadours, or Ovid's *Amores*, or Virgil's Aeneas and Dido episode. Still, inventionism rules in the humanities, the obvious appeal being that it can allow scholars to become inventors themselves.

I was thrown off a bit by Professor Rebhun. She was wearing a lovely but discreet silver heart-shaped pin that suggested a belief in love. And yet she was asserting that love was merely an illusion imposed by the social structure: that the indigenous Brazilians didn't have love as we know it until economic pressures made it *functional*. The need to "commodify sexual desire" in an urban context—to embed childbearing in a capitalistic system of ownership and property transfer—required the invention of a fiction called love.

What I took from the lecture was that it's really all about money, if you look at it in a hardheaded cultural-materialist, anthropological way. One could quarrel with the reductive reasoning of this materialist-inventorist view of love and sex. One could ask just how "economic pressures"—these cold abstractions—could possibly invent (as opposed to influence) such profound and complex states as romantic and erotic love. Does it all come down to "We are living in a material world"? And we are all material girls, so to speak?

The professor's lecture made me think of another song, one my parents sang together when we were on a drive or sometimes when they were just standing around the kitchen. It was their favorite song, the one I remember as defining the love that kept them together for forty-five years, till death did them part: "Side by Side."

*Oh, we ain't got a barrel of money.
Maybe we're ragged and funny,
But we'll travel along
Singin' a song,
Side by side.*

Hearing them sing that refrain made me believe in love even before I met my first supermodel. (Just kidding.) But I grew up believing that love was more than property relations, and not a delusional product of them.

The professor continued her grim disquisition on the specious, epiphenomenal nature of romantic love. Not only

was it a delusion, she said, but it could be a *deadly* delusion, because so many of the great romantic loves in literature, from Tristan and Isolde to Romeo and Juliet, always and inevitably culminated in, aimed toward—were virtually fulfilled in—“mutual suicide.” Love—the suicide bomb of the emotions. There is an inevitable disconnect, she told us, between our idea of romance and the stable relationship of marriage. Abandon all hope of love, ye who enter into wedlock. Our ideas of romantic love are incongruent not just with marriage but with *all* long-term relationships, not to mention with child-rearing. The whole concept of romance can be seen as “an attempt to beautify lust.”

Her pessimism, her “realism,” her reductionism, her materialism, were so relentless that even though I was seeking



to hear words that would help to *extinguish* the last embers of longing, I felt those embers flare up in rebellion. This lecture was a total multicultural, multidisciplinary, multiphasic attack on the reality of romantic love. And I wish it had been more convincing, because what I remember most from this lecture was the motion-detector problem, which became for me a kind of metaphor.

There were technical difficulties with this room, too, though they were of a nature different from the ones Professor Summers had encountered. The lights kept going out at what seemed like significant moments in Professor Rebhun's lecture. She'd be talking about Tristan and Isolde and mutual suicide, and suddenly the room would go dark. It turned out that this was an attendance problem. There were so few in the lecture room to hear the deconstruction of romance that the sensors that were designed to keep the lights on as long as they detected some motion—some sign of life—would periodically shut the lights off because they detected none. I suspect that if the room had instead featured an “emotion detector,” Professor Rebhun's materialism would have turned out the lights for good.

DAY THREE:

THE HISTORY OF THE VIBRATOR

Call me a coward, but I skipped Day Three. As I understand it, the lecture was a serious academic discourse on the evolution of vibrator technology, from post-Civil War steam-powered contraptions (no joke!) to today's superefficient Wascally Wabbits, Wile E. Coyotes, and Elmer Fudds (note to fact-checking: I made up the last two).

But I did begin to see a pattern developing in the academic lectures. Day One: the medicalization of sex. Day Two: the materialization (or monetization) of sex. Day Three: the mechanization of sex. And then ...

DAY FOUR:

THE SPIRITUALIZATION OF SEX

Thursday, Valentine's Day, was supposed to end in a big debate, and this time on the train to New Haven my Sex Week homework included heavyweight, embarrassing-to-read-on-the-train tomes by the featured debaters: *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Tantric Sex*, by Judy Kuriansky, who is described in that book as an adjunct professor at Columbia and a sex therapist; and *Kosher Sex*, by Rabbi Shmuley Boteach, the former spiritual adviser to Oxford's Jewish community and a best-selling sex-and-love-advice author.

Dr. Judy's book was a curious combination of the spiritual and the technical, and even though I'd resolved to leave the pleasures of the flesh behind, I am always open to learning new things. I have to admit I came across two technical terms in *The Complete Idiot's Guide* that I had not encountered before: the “Kivin method” and the “X spot.”

I think I'm just *not* going to get into the Kivin method in this story; I'm trying for an R rating. As for the X spot, it, too, is X-rated, but at least I can speak of it by analogy with the G spot (which isn't exactly G-rated). The X spot, Dr. Judy tells us, is like the G spot but in another location—an important location that I won't reveal to you (and I'm keeping quiet about the “AFE zone” and the “PFE zone,” too). But this brave new venture into alphabetical terra incognita reminded me of one of the more unusual reporting experiences I've had, doing a story I never wrote up: a story about the sixth World Congress of Sexology, which was held in Washington, D.C., in the mid-1980s, just about the time when the G spot was coming into prominence and people were still debating whether it existed and what it was for.

“Sexology”: It's too bad it's such a silly-sounding moniker, one that makes the whole profession seem like a Monty Python sketch. And yet the scientific study of sex (as opposed to unscientific, Kinsey-type sexology) has a place in a world that for centuries lived in ignorance about the way things work “down there” (to use the technical term). Although it may be true that we suffer from too much talk about sex, we don't necessarily have too much information.

What I remember about the World Congress of Sexology is that the debate over the existence of the G spot was similar to the argument of medieval cartographers over the location of the western edge of the world. I remember reeling from all the scientific sex talk and then going almost immediately to one of my Yale class reunions, where I mentioned the G-spot debate. The wife of one of my classmates declared forthrightly, "I don't know what the debate's about; *I have one!*"

And now, according to Dr. Judy, we have the X spot—if not a new place on the map, a new *name* for a place whose existence anecdotal evidence, let us say, has suggested. Of course, there's an argument for discovering these alphabet spots in innocence and wonder, although in reality innocence and wonder can be a euphemism for ignorance and error. (But I can't wait to ask about the X spot at my next Yale reunion.)

So I applaud the investigative-sexologist side of Dr. Judy, but that was not the side on display during her appearance at the Yale debate. The Valentine's Night debate—tantric versus kosher sex—took place at the Joseph Slifka Center for Jewish Life at Yale. Dr. Judy entered wearing an electric-blue blazer and turquoise jewelry, and she radiated media-celeb empowerment. (She had to interrupt her talk to do a live feed to CNN, she told us.) Instead of giving a conventional debate presentation, she put on a tape of Bette Midler singing "The Rose," and a selection of Lilith Fair favorites, and led the fifty or so attendees through a series of touchy-feely "intimacy exercises," lining up strangers to hold their hands on one another's hearts and stare into one another's eyes and perform other California hot-tub maneuvers. This seemed to drive Rabbi Boteach out of the room, although he later explained that he'd had a pressing need to phone his family.

What was curious about Dr. Judy's talk, interspersed with the intimacy exercises, was her insistence that tantric sex isn't really about sex, or anything, you know, dirty like that—as if it would be somehow shameful if it were about sex, or certainly something lesser than the religious experience that tantric practices turn sex into, thus sanctifying it.

"Tantric sex is ... not about the penis and vagina," Dr. Judy declared. "It's using sex to move energy, to activate higher states of bliss." Sex, even tantric sex, is just a tool, so to speak, to lift us above sex; the sexual energy is a "generator"—which somehow, inappropriately I'm sure, made me

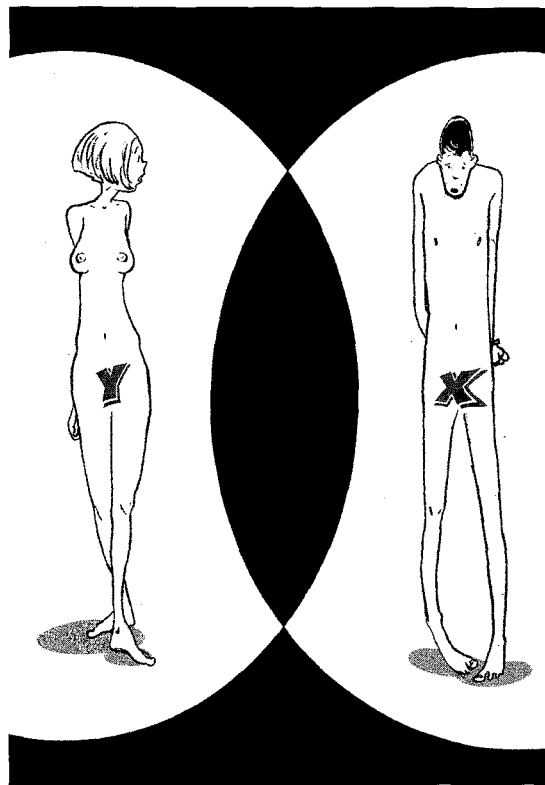
think of those steam-powered vibrators. (It also made me think of the Woody Allen movie where his character is asked by a psychiatrist, "Do you think sex is dirty?" and he replies, "It is if you're doing it right.")

One got the inescapable impression from Dr. Judy that sex was good only when it was goody-goody, spiritualized. Rabbi Boteach was not much different, in his own kosher way. You know about Rabbi Boteach, right? He's the guy who started out as an earnest young Orthodox rabbinical adviser to Oxford students and then somehow, by a process that is still a bit mysterious to me (involving, at a crucial point, Michael Jackson's visit to Oxford), morphed into that special contemporary phenomenon, the "celebrity friend"—of Michael and Uri Geller and the whole Hollywood kabbalah crowd. All of which he parlayed into best-selling books,

incessant TV-talk-show appearances, and more best sellers, until ... Rabbi Boteach confessed to the world that he felt used and burned out, and decided that he must step off the celebrity carousel to regain his balance. It was this new, subdued Rabbi Boteach that we were seeing. Although he still had names to drop, he made a point of dropping the name of Sir Isaiah Berlin ("When I was at Oxford, I asked Sir Isaiah ...") before dropping the name of Madonna.

Still, Rabbi Boteach came across as more intelligent and self-deprecating than his previous relentless self-promotion suggested. He displayed an awareness that the realities of making marriage work involved more than kabbalah and sanctification. He even invoked "webcam girls,"

from reality-porn sites, in the context of what he said would be his next book: *Kosher Adultery*. The concept here seemed to be to make marriage and monogamy "dirty" (in a good way) as a means of addressing a problem he had evidently heard about from those seeking his counsel: that some husbands can be more lustfully aroused by "webcam girls" than by their wives. "Kosher adultery," I suspected, involves what has often been called "role playing" (or as Rabbi Boteach put it, "bringing the erotic energy of unfaithfulness into marriage"), getting the wives to act like "other women." But when *Kosher Adultery* came out, later in the year, I was surprised to see it emphasize the notion that *husbands* should fantasize that their wives were with other *men*. So the wives are playing other women, the husbands are playing other men ... it takes a lot of work to preserve Shmuleyan monogamy.



Still, I admired Rabbi Boteach's willingness to explore these complex questions. But then I was disappointed when he proceeded to follow a path similar to Dr. Judy's: he abstracted from real people with real bodies to mystical circles and lines. In a way his approach is not unlike Harvard's chimpification of sex, at least in degree of abstraction, although instead of appealing to science it creates a supernatural, kabbalistic gloss—something to do with the fact that God starts out as a circle, an infinity that can't be measured or apprehended. But to create finite creatures "God had to withhold, to vacate Himself to radiate a finite light, a line that represents the masculine aspect of God, Elohim." The Shekinah, or visible manifestation of God, in kabbalah is the feminine aspect, God as circle. Because "men are lines and women are circles," their sexual natures reflect that. "Men are linear, women are cyclical."

Talk about your reflexive essentialism. "The number ten is made up of a circle and a line, which makes it a vision of perfection," Rabbi Boteach averred, sounding like Louis Farrakhan discoursing on the number nineteen. The world is supposed to be about the supremacy of the feminine, "because love is greater than justice," Rabbi Boteach said, now descending into John Gray-style Mars-and-Venus psychobabble.

It was then, after all this talk of sacred lines and circles, that I thought of Ronald Reagan. Not in *that* way. Instead I remembered a certain slogan that became popular among "movement conservatives" in the eighties—"Let Reagan be Reagan!" And after this double dose of tantric and kosher sanctification of sex following on mechanization, materialization, medicalization, and chimpification, it made me want to say, in effect, "Let Reagan be Reagan": *Let sex be sex*.

Why won't the experts let sex be sex? An answer to that question suggested itself on ...

DAY FIVE:

THE DAY OF "SEX WITH FOUR PROFESSORS"

This turned out, to my surprise, to be one of the least well attended but most illuminating events of Sex Week. When I say it wasn't well attended, let me put it this way: the attendees, if you exclude the two earnest and thoughtful undergraduate organizers of Sex Week (Eric Rubenstein and Jacqueline Farber), were outnumbered by the four panelists.

Seeing the utter emptiness of the venue, the four panelists, in consultation with the two organizers, decided to turn the event into a conversation among themselves. And it wasn't a bad conversation at all, because the four professors represented, for the most part, the humanistic tradition in Yale social-science thinking about sex. One could hear echoes of Erik Erikson's "identity psychology" as one of the professors spoke of the difficulty college students found in suddenly adjusting their "affectional currents"—directed so long to family members—to sexual partners. (This seemed a

little unrealistic in an age when suburban kids are playing oral-sex versions of *Spin the Bottle* at age fourteen, although that may not be the kind of affectional current the professor was referring to.)

There was also much optimistic talk about the ways in which "Norwegian studies" have shown that "beginning sex education as early as kindergarten" is a Good Thing. All things Scandinavian are Good Things to sex experts: so wholesome, so rational.

But something more interesting emerged from the "sex with four professors" panel. Perhaps it was because one of the professors was a psychiatric counselor and another was a minister. These people had been in the trenches dealing with troubled students. They had not dealt only with the optimistic sex-as-enlightenment, sex-as-sanctifying-gospel, sex-as-Norwegian-kindergarten view of things; they had come face-to-face with young people who had been badly hurt, emotionally devastated, by sexual experiences in college.

I forget which one of them said it, but in my notes is the line "Turned upside down sex can be a *nightmare*. Sex can have *terrible* effects." There is another line in the same vein: "Jealousy is the most powerful emotion." That's a major statement: jealousy, the misery-inducing derivative of love and lust, is more powerful than its progenitors. The tail wagging the dog again.

Here, perhaps, is the explanation for why nobody really wants to let Reagan be Reagan when it comes to sex: Because it *can* be dangerous, even devastating, not a blissful "energy transfer"—and if an "energy transfer" at all, then more like stepping on the third rail.

DAY SIX

Iskipped "Sex Fest 2002," the film festival. Instead I went to the video store and rented the film I recalled as being at once the most erotic and the bleakest and darkest vision of sex on celluloid, one whose very title sums up the destructive third-rail power of sexuality: *Damage*. Jeremy Irons and Juliette Binoche destroy themselves and their families in the grip of an insane but utterly convincing passion (she's his son's fiancée!). Just the kind of thing Norwegian kindergarten fails to prepare you for.

DAY SEVEN:

THE "CELEBRITY PANEL"

I'm not sure you could call them celebrities outside the sex, love, and pornography realm. But I was glad I attended, because there were several surprising revelations from the celebrity panel—and one that was truly shocking.

Dr. Susan Block, dressed to thrill with a bare midriff and a cowboy hat, told the audience (more than the usual handful) that she was a Yale graduate and that "we didn't have Sex Week when I was at Yale—we had sex all year round." She also boasted, "We had sex with teachers, and it was a good way of learning more from them."

Dr. Block spoke up for the old values of the sixties sexual revolution: "Sex is revolutionary!" she told the audience. "Nietzsche said that the spiritualization of sex is love." Then she shifted into a paean to Harvard's favorite primates, the bonobos, the feminist heroines of the chimp world—"extremely sexual" primates, she told us, "who have learned to use sex to defuse violence."

Nancy Slotnick, a Harvard graduate who invented a café and dating service on Manhattan's Upper West Side, called Drip, spoke up for love, albeit in a curious way: "Love is women's favorite fetish," she said. "A fetish is something you don't need to get sex but you feel you need to enjoy it."

But it was Al Goldstein who provided a fitting climax to Sex Week. Goldstein at first seemed to take pleasure in bringing his obscenity-riddled view of sex to Yale's august precincts, making indecent proposals to the women panelists while boasting that his son was "a Harvard man, who's graduating from Harvard Law School this weekend at the top of his class." He talked a good game, all the while keeping in character (obscene wise-guy loudmouth), but the subtext suggested that he was just an old softie. Well, maybe that's not the most apt phrase to use. How about "suggested that he was a romantic at heart"? An embittered romantic, but a romantic.

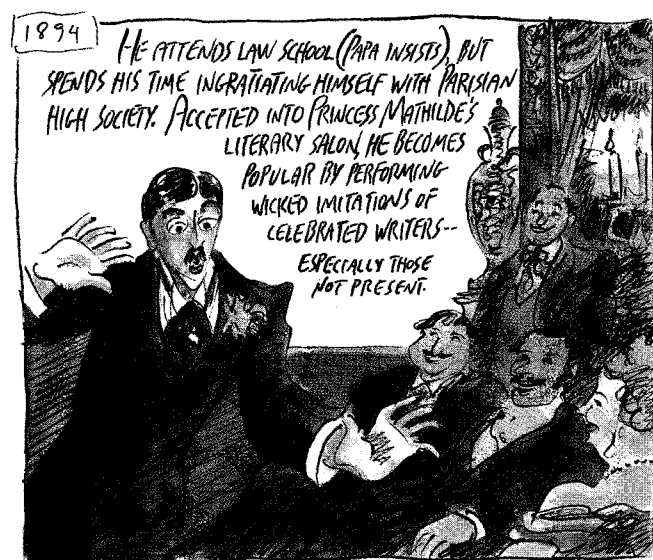
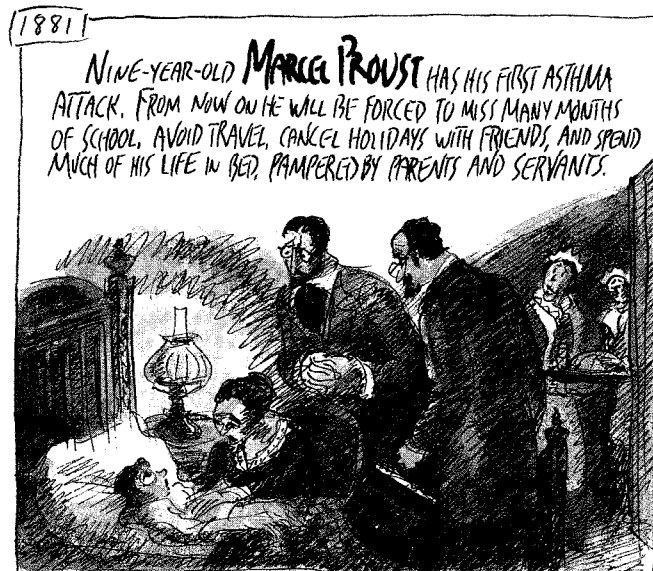
Goldstein disclosed an astonishing autobiographical fact: the publisher of *Screw*, the self-proclaimed shameless pornographer, has been married *four times*! Now, they say that a second marriage is "the triumph of hope over experience." But third and fourth marriages are more generally the triumph of addiction over everything else. Addiction to love. Why four marriages *unless* for love?

It may be the ultimate tribute to the power of love—perhaps the most powerful tribute since *Antony and Cleopatra*, a tale about two other much married people possessed by addiction to love. It suggests that love triumphs over the lure of pornography; love is more seductive than webcam girls, faster than a speeding bullet, more powerful than a locomotive—not the suicide bomb but the superhero of emotions. Of course, Al Goldstein would never come out and say it. "Men are doomed!" he shouted to the bewildered Yale audience. "Love is *evil*." He was like the maddened King Lear of lust, raging against his most dangerous foe: "Do thy worst, blind Cupid," Lear declares. "I'll not love."

I'm not sure whether Goldstein really meant it or whether it was the bitter love-hate cry of the hopeless addict for his one true fix. Still, it was just what I wanted to hear. It was music to my ears. Love is *evil*. Thank you, Al. ▀

Ron Rosenbaum writes a biweekly column for The New York Observer. His most recent book is *The Secret Parts of Fortune* (2000), a collection of nonfiction. Rosenbaum's article "Degrees of Evil" appeared in the February 2002 *Atlantic*.

Edward Sorel lives in Manhattan. He and his wife, Nancy Caldwell Sorel, created the *First Encounters* series, which ran in The *Atlantic* for twelve years and was published as a collection in 1994.



1888

WHILE AT THE LYCÉE CONDORCET HE FALLS IN LOVE WITH A CLASSMATE AND MAKES UNWANTED SEXUAL ADVANCES TO HIM. THIS, TOGETHER WITH HIS MANNERISMS, BIG WHITE COLLARS, AND FLYING CRAVATS, MAKES PROUST THE SCHOOL'S FAVORITE OBJECT OF RIDICULE.



1889

THRILLED BY THE PROSPECT OF LIVING TOGETHER WITH YOUNG, VIRILE MEN, PROUST JOINS THE ARMY, BUT IT DOESN'T WORK OUT AS HE HAD HOPED. WHEN HIS ASTHMATIC WHEEZING KEEPS THE MEN AWAKE, HE IS HOUSED IN A ROOM FAR AWAY FROM EVERYONE.



1896

REASURES AND DAYS IS PUBLISHED. WHEN A REVIEWER CALLS HIM "ONE OF THOSE PRETTY LITTLE SOCIETY BOYS WHO'VE MANAGED TO GET THEMSELVES PREGNANT WITH LITERATURE," PROUST CHALLENGES HIM TO A DUEL, AND SHOTS ARE FIRED. BUT EVEN REVIEWS LESS CRUEL ARE FAR FROM KIND.



1905

HIS MOTHER DIES. PROUST, NOW RICH, BECOMES A "PATRON" TO YOUNG, WORKING-CLASS HETEROSEXUALS, BUYING THEM EXTRAVAGANT GIFTS. HE ALSO INVESTS IN A MALE BROTHEL, ENTITLING HIM TO VIEW THE BIZARRE TASTES OF ITS CLIENTELE FROM A HIDDEN PEEP HOLE.



1922

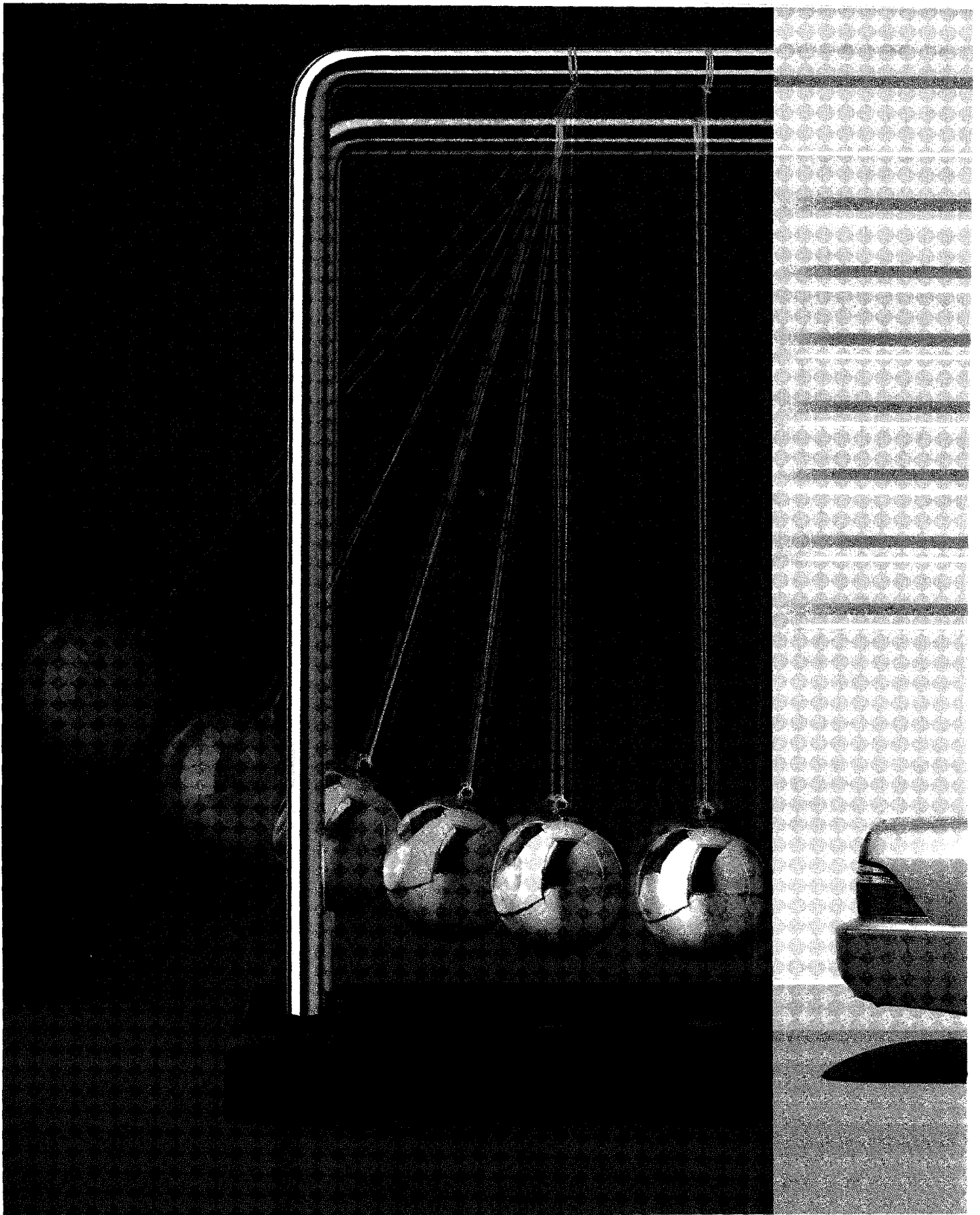
TAKING ADRENALINE TO WRITE AND OPIUM TO SLEEP, PROUST IS IN FAILING HEALTH. NEVERTHELESS HE ATTEMPTS ONE LAST ASSIGNATION. WAITING FOR A FORMER LOVER IN A CHILLY HOTEL LOBBY UNTIL 3:00 A.M., HE CONTRACTS PNEUMONIA AND DIES SOON AFTER. HE IS FIFTY-ONE.



1927



TIME REGAINED, THE LAST VOLUME OF HIS EPIC NOVEL, IS PUBLISHED. AS PROUST'S FAME GROWS, THE TOWN OF ILLIERS, WHICH PROUST CALLED "COMBRAY" IN HIS NOVEL, CHANGES ITS NAME TO ILLIERS-COMBRAY, TO ATTRACT PROUST PILGRIMS FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD.



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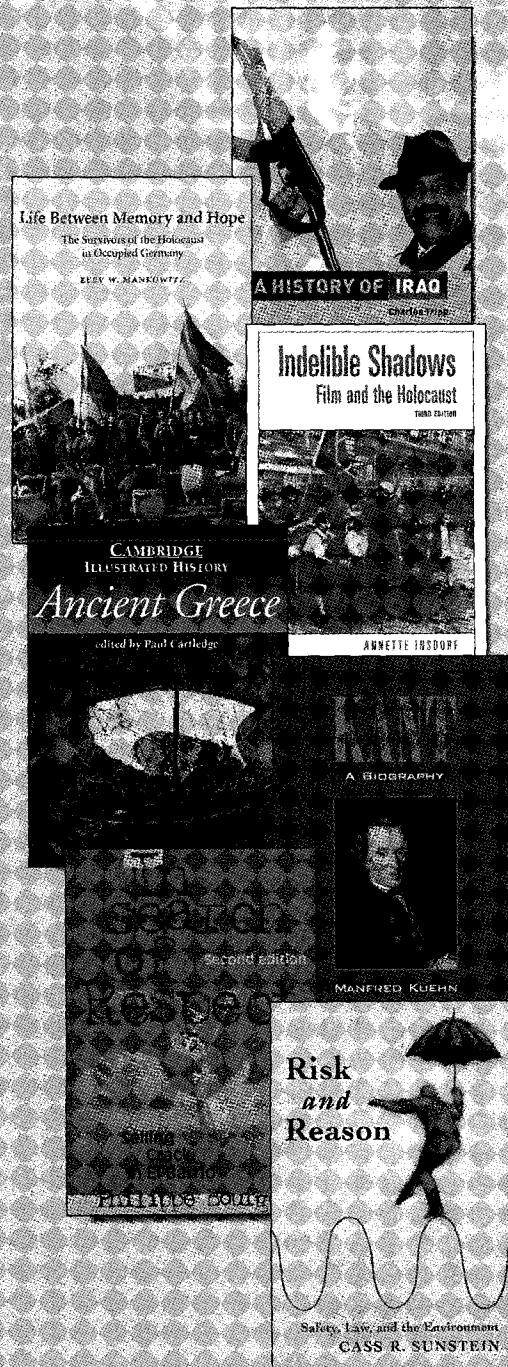
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HAPPY HOUR

A short story

BY ALISON BAKER

Illustration by Francis Livingston

.....

Late in the day we go out to the Home for happy hour. It's a little custom we have when I'm on the Cape now. I buy a nice bottle of Chardonnay, or one of Beaujolais, and round about four o'clock I pack my aged mother into my rented car and we drive to the edge of town, where the handsome, gleaming Home houses the ancient and the crippled.

I drop my mother off at the front door and watch her totter in, carrying her cane. When I'm not here, she comes at lunchtime on the old folks' bus, and pokes along through the halls, nodding and smiling and stopping to say hello to any oldsters parked along the wall. At this time of day, though, most of the inhabitants are already in their rooms, propped up in chairs watching Oprah, so my mother makes her way with expedition down to the end of the southeast corridor, to the room where Me Old Dad lives.

I park in the visitors' lot and follow in my mother's footsteps, lugging the liter of today's vino through the bright lobby and past the reproductions of fine art on the walls. I'm fond of the Home, which has a good reputation; I like to think that getting my father into it was a coup. Today the corridors smell of beef and lemon cleanser, and the nursing station at the head of Dad's section is deserted except for Violet Kennedy, who reclines beside it in a padded chair, taking her sweater off.

"Hello, Mrs. Kennedy," I say. Violet looks at the ceiling and cries "Help me!" in the ugliest old voice you can imagine, but it doesn't bother me anymore.

In every room an old, slumpy person is staring at a TV. "Get your hair out of your eyes, Martha," I hear a crone from 211 shout. "You'd be prettier if you'd use a comb."

Halfway down the hall Bobbi is standing at the mobile meds cart, mixing drugs in a cup. "I'm on my way down," she says brightly.

Aren't we all? I think, but out loud I say, "See you there."

As I arrive at Dad's little pink room, Martin, a tall Jamaican man, and Ella, a very pretty young woman from Brazil, are lifting my father out of his bed.

"Okay, turn now," Martin says, "turn, turn, turn to me." I could listen to his musical voice forever.

Dad's old feet patter on the linoleum floor as he tries to help Martin and Ella turn him. Then Martin says, "Okay, now, Mr. Williams, here is the chair, behind you," and they lower Dad into the wheelchair. Martin moves in behind him and grasps him under the arms, and Ella leans over in front. They shift him to the left, and Ella stuffs a cushion between his hip and the side of the chair.

"Okay now, Mr. Williams?" Martin says, bending over to be at Dad's eye level. I can see Dad's head slightly, slightly nod. "See you later then," Martin says, and Ella caresses his shoulder and says, "See you later, Mr. Williams." They smile at my mother and come out of the room, and smile at me and say hello as they pass.

My mother is pulling dead leaves off the foil-wrapped plants on the windowsill, left over from the most recent Happy Holiday.

"Hi, Dad," I shout from the door, and I walk past the bed where Harry died, to Dad's side of the room.

Dad slowly, slowly, slowly turns his head toward me, and his hand lifts slightly from the arm of his chair.

"Bill, can't you say hello?" my mother says.

The faintest of whispers issues from Dad.

"Hi, Dad," I say again.

"I'll say it then," my mother says. "Hello, Vera."

"He *did* say hello," I say. How on earth do they manage when I'm not here? "Mom, are you wearing your hearing aids?"

"What?" she says. She looks at Dad. "Did you say hello?"

He slowly, slowly turns his face toward her. He slightly, slightly nods.

"Oh, damn," she says. "This damn thing." She cups a hand beside her right ear and then her left ear, and shakes her head. "The battery's dead again."

The batteries in my mother's hearing aids seem to die at the drop of a hat. "*Do you have any with you?*" I shout.

"What?" she shouts back.

"Batteries."

"I have batteries," she says.

"Want me to—?" I hold out my hand.

"What do *you* want them for?" she asks.

"I'll put them in for you," I say, enunciating clearly and pointing to her purse, to her hearing aid, to my own chest.

She shakes her head. "I can do it," she says, and she sits down in the visitor's chair and takes the hearing aid out of her left ear and begins rooting through her purse in search of her spare-battery case.

"How you doing, Dad?" I say.

"What?" my mother says, looking up.

"I'm asking Dad how he is," I shout.

"I can't *hear* you," she says, waving her hearing aid.

"Wait till I put the new battery in."

I look at Dad. "How you doing, Dad?" I whisper.

"As well as can be expected" is what I'm sure he whispers back.

"Care for a drink?"

"Yes," he says very clearly.

I pull the bottle of Beaujolais out of its brown-paper wrapper and, holding it against my forearm, present it to Me Old Dad as if I were wearing a tux and he were a young buck of seventy sitting close to a buxom blonde at a white-linen-covered table for two. He nods very, very slightly. With a flourish I pull a corkscrew from the pocket of my denim jacket and open the bottle of wine.

"There." My mother taps at her ear. The battery is installed, the hearing aid replaced, and she can hear again. Pretty well. "What is it?" she says.

"Beaujolais," I say.

"Oh, Daddy's favorite," she says. She leans forward and pats his knee. "Isn't it, Bill?"

He slowly turns his face toward her and slightly nods.

I take three plastic cups out of my father's handkerchief drawer, set them on the adjustable table, and fill each of them half full of dark wine. My mother takes a straw from the cache in his sock drawer, unwraps it and sticks it into one of the cups, and, holding the cup up to his face, inserts the end of the straw between his lips.

I take a drink of my Beaujolais.

My father sucks, but his straw remains empty. My mother pulls it out of his mouth and reinserts it. My father sucks again, and the straw turns pink. Beaujolais is delivered to the target. My mother removes the straw from his mouth and sets down the cup. She picks up her own and takes a healthy swig.

"Mmm," she says. She holds it up toward me. "Good!" She looks at Dad. "You like?"

He lifts his eyes toward her and slightly, slightly nods.

With a rattle and a whirl, Bobbi and the meds cart appear outside the door. "Ah, happy hour," Bobbi says. She bustles around the cart, opening containers and pouring sludge into a cup. She crosses the room, stirring as she comes, and gets right up close to Dad. She says, "Here's your Sinemet and your Requip and your potassium supplement and your Paxil, Mr. Williams."

Dad opens his mouth, and she spoons in the medicated pulp.

"What's it in?" I say, and Bobbi says, "A little chocolate ice cream, with thickener to make it go down easily."

"Must taste good with wine," I say.

"Oh, Veral!" My mother laughs as if I am the wittiest comic on the face of God's green earth. I wonder what she thinks I said.

Bobbi puts her hand on Dad's shoulder and leans close to gaze into his eyes. "Did it all go down?" she says, and he slightly nods. She pats him and steps back. "Want some orange juice to wash it down?"

"No," he says clearly, and he motions with his left hand, the stronger one, toward the table in front of him.

"He wants more wine," my mother says, and she picks up his cup.

"I'll have someone bring some in anyway," Bobbi says briskly.

It is nearly five o'clock on a February evening, and the world outside my father's windows is going dark. Evening is my second favorite time of day in the Home, after early morning, when things have not yet begun to hop. In the evening the inmates are tucked into their own rooms and the people who mop and clean and instigate therapy have gone home for the day. The only people around now are the ones who medicate, the ones who lift and turn and carry and prop, the ones who feed. Except for two dozen televisions, and Mrs. Kennedy calling for help, the evening is quiet. It's especially pleasant because Dad's last roommate has not yet been replaced.

("How's Harry?" I asked during a phone call last month. "Dead," Dad said. He didn't seem much bothered. He expects to die himself one of these days.)

My father's windows look down on the rear entrance, where trucks deliver things and ambulances pick up corpses. Beyond that driveway is a playground where the children of the Home's employees, jerky little urchins in bright colors who yell and toddle and swing and weep, cavort in fine weather. On the hillside beyond is a grove of scrawny oaks, whose leaves have turned from green to gold to brown to gone in the months Dad has lived in his little pink room. Two red-tailed hawks sometimes sail through the sky above the oaks, together or alone, at leisure or pursued by crows. The drops of bright yellow I see from time to time are American goldfinches.

My mother, never one to sit still when she can putter, is now taking Dad's clean clothes from a clear-plastic bag and putting them into his five drawers. "Someone mixed the white with the colored," she says, holding up a pair of pink socks.

"I don't care," Dad says.

She looks up. "What?" She looks at me.

"He doesn't care," I say loudly.

"Of course not," she says, bending again to her labor. "He never cared what he looked like."

"Ready for more wine?" I say to Dad, and I think he



nods, so I lift his cup and insert the straw between his lips. He sucks mightily and nothing happens.

"You have to put it in farther," My mother has abandoned her putting away of clothes in order to monitor my work.

I pull out the straw, my father's lips open another smidgen, and I plunge the straw deep into the interior, sure it is shredding the soft red tissues of his cheeks. He sucks, and the straw darkens. After a moment I say, "Get enough?" He slightly nods, and I pull away the straw.

The clean laundry stowed, my mother sits again in the visitor's chair. She leans toward my father. "Did you get enough?"

"Yes," he says clearly.

"Orange juice?" Millicent has come, another of the beautiful Brazilian women who take care of my father and his fellow incarcerated.

"Oh, yes," my mother says. "Bill, look, Millicent has brought your orange juice."

"Thank you," Dad says to Millicent, who has crossed the room and placed the cup of bright liquid on the table

beside the empty wine cups and the half-full bottle.

"You're welcome, Mr. Williams," she says. She smooths his hair briefly with the palm of her hand, as if conferring blessedness.

"Bill, say thank you," my mother says. She looks up at Millicent. "Thank you, Millicent."

"You're welcome, Mrs. Williams," she says. She smiles at my mother, and she smiles at me as she walks by.

I smile very hard back at her. I try always to look like a great obsequious pool of middle-aged gratitude to these young people from foreign lands who take care of my father and smile at my mother. I would like to give them money, but they can't accept it. I would like to give them gifts, but I don't. I would like to tell them all how much I appreciate their kindness and their willingness to do this work, but if I try to say more to them than a few words of greeting, I start to sob and can only blurt clogged, unintelligible monosyllables.

"She is so cute," my mother says. "Isn't she, Bill?"

He turns his eyes toward her and nods slightly.

"Well, *I* think she's very cute," my mother says. "Do you know she has a thirteen-year-old daughter?"

"She does?" I say. Millicent looks about twenty-two years old.

"That's Emilia," Dad whispers.

"Yes, she does," my mother says. "She and her husband both work here."

"Emilia?" I say.

"No, Millicent," my mother says.

"Emilia has the daughter," my father says.

"Dad says it's Emilia who has the daughter," I say.

My mother shakes her head. "Bill, that was *Millicent*." She reaches over and tucks the towel more securely around his neck.

My father clears his throat. "Emilia has the thirteen-year-old daughter," he says.

"What?" My mother leans close to him, placing her ear directly in front of his mouth.

My father gathers his energy and says loudly, "Emilia has the thirteen-year-old daughter."

My mother shakes her head and sits back. She looks at me. "I can't hear him, can you?"

"*Dad says it's Emilia who has the thirteen-year-old daughter*," I shout.

She looks at him in surprise. "Are you sure? I was sure that was Millicent."

"It was *Millicent* who brought the juice, but *Emilia* has the daughter," I say loudly.

"Well," my mother says. "Bill, are you going to drink that or not?"

Dad nods, and my mother removes the straw from his wine cup and puts it into his orange juice. She holds it to his mouth, and bit by bit, without pause and with great effort, he drinks it all.

"Shall we have another?" My mother is holding up her plastic cup, and, never one to refuse wine, I pour some for her and some for me.

She picks up a cloth from the nightstand and wipes pink spittle from my father's beard.

"More for you, Dad?" I say.

"No," he says.

"Well," my mother says. "Here we are."

"Okay, quiz time," I say. "Who is Doctor McDonough's favorite poet?" Yesterday my father and I rode the cripples'

DISCRETION

Wearing only moonglow

and the fire's shawls

of final smoke, she made her way from the tent
at 2:00 A.M., then squatted to pee,

and the heavenly light showed me everything:

its cool tongues of silver lapping mountain
stones and the never-motionless leaves
of aspens, licking her back, her hips,

haunches, and more, illuminating even the deep

green eyes of whatever animal it was
that watched her from the forest then—
a deer, I believed, and still believe,

though I confess I did not rise that night

to make sure, did not shine my light or murmur
but waited until she returned,

letting my head settle slowly back

down to the pillow made of my clothes

and welcomed her shivering
back into the tent, from which

I had sworn I would not look.

—ROBERT WRIGLEY

*Robert Wrigley teaches at the University of Idaho.
This poem is part of a collection called Lives of the
Animals, to be published next October.*

bus to his neurologist's office. After only a twenty-minute wait the nurse beckoned, and I pushed Me Old Dad into the inner sanctum, where Dr. McDonough shook Dad's hand, said he hoped they were treating Dad well at the Home, and asked Dad if he'd written any poetry lately.

"No," my father said. "I can't write."

Dr. McDonough looked at me.

"He can't write anymore," I said.

"That would be a problem," Dr. McDonough said. He sat down and crossed his legs at the ankle. "My son writes poetry. None published yet, though. I have never written, but I love the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins." He looked at my father. "You know Hopkins?" he said in a louder voice.

"Nothing is so beautiful as spring," my father said.

Dr. McDonough remained as expressionless as a man lacking dopamine. "Yes," he said in a noncommittal fashion.

"It's why we're here," I said. "That he can't write. We were hoping you could think of some last little thing, some drug, to squeeze a bit more function from the limbs."

"Ah, yes," Dr. McDonough said. "When the brain cells are dead, there's no bringing them back."

"Glory be to God for dappled things, for skies of couple-colour as a brindled cow," my father said.

"What's that?" Dr. McDonough said.

Now I say it again. "Doctor McDonough's favorite poet." "Oh, that three-named man," my mother says, for I had filled her in yesterday, once Dad, exhausted, had reported back to quarters and been put to bed. "Gerald Something Hopkins."

"Two points for Mother," I say. "Okay. Here's the next one. Has Doctor McDonough's son been published yet?"

"His son?" my mother says.

"No," my father says.

"Got it," I say, pointing my rapidly emptying cup at my father. "Here's the clincher. What is the physical condition of Doctor McDonough's seventeen-year-old daughter?"

"I didn't know he had a daughter," my mother says.

"Virgin," Dad says.

"You win!" I cry.

"A virgin?" my mother says, having heard my father's last word distinctly.

My father's face seems to indicate amusement, and I believe he is vibrating slightly with laughter.

"As Doctor McDonough sat reading the paper one night, he overheard his daughter and her friend in the kitchen, discussing their love lives," I explain to my mother. "His daughter said, 'I'm still a virgin.' Doctor McDonough's heart swelled with joy." Dr. McDonough had paused yesterday, pen poised to up Dad's Requip another half mil, to tell us this. "Okay, final question, fifty points. What is Doctor McDonough's daughter's friend's opinion of Doctor McDonough's daughter's lack of sexual experience?"

My mother is busily draining her plastic cup of dregs.

"Not missing much," my father says, and his mouth breaks into the shape of a grin. His eyes squeeze closed. He is laughing indeed.

"One more for the road," my mother says, and she fills her cup and mine. Even though I am now the designated driver for life, I do not stop her.

How did this happen? How can I be so pleased to see my father tucked in here in this sparkling, barrier-free, circumscribed existence? I know the answer to that one: after years of quarreling about the sharp-edged end tables, treacherous footstools, slippery throw rugs, and precarious lamps in my parents' house; after months of forcing visiting nurses and home health aides and grab-bar installers through their front door; after days of no-more-driving rage, when the summer air was so heavy with furious shouting about the *car* that I might be forgiven for thinking I'd fallen through the looking glass back into my adolescence; after these long years of decline and fall and fall, how can I be anything but pleased to have Dad safely in the Home?

And surely they are, too. Because every time they gave in, relinquished another acre of territory, accepted another piece of undesired help, we sighed and sat down for happy hour. And (as long as Dad could speak boldly and hold his glass) they'd lift their drinks and marvel, "What would we do without you?"

Dad's in the Home. His situation, I think, is perhaps what he thought he always wanted: a total life of the mind, nothing to do but think and read. Well, of course he loved to eat, too, and he has said that he sometimes longs for crackers and peanut butter, or a celery stalk filled with cream cheese, or apple pie—unpuréed.

My mother, too, despite her mild stroke, has everything she wanted: the house is hers again; she can entertain her friends (too late for that, of course, since all her friends are dead except Mrs. Rager, who is mad, and Margie Caviglia, who lies bedridden in her own home, attended by an angry daughter). She shops, she reads, she sleeps as late as she wants to, and she takes the Council on Aging bus to the Home four days a week to feed my father his puréed lunch. Then she takes the same bus home again, brings in the mail, and sits down in the blue chair to read *Martha Stewart Living*.

"I keep thinking I'm going to stop subscribing," she has said more than once, "but then I think, *just one more year*."

Something bumps at the door, and we hear the sound of labored breathing. My father moves his eyes in that direction and then turns his head the other way and says, as if thoroughly sickened, "Oh, *God*."

My mother has heard nothing.

I turn around and see an aged man struggling to disengage the wheel of his chair from the edge of the door. He is panting with the effort, working hard, whether to move forward or to back up I can't tell.

"Goodness," I say to my father. "Who's that?"

"It's Mr. Henderson."

He says it in such a tone of disgust that I laugh, and suddenly my father laughs too.

"Does he come often?" I say.

"Yes," my father says, his eyes closed.

"What?" my mother asks suspiciously. "What are you laughing at?"

"At Mr. Henderson," I say, leaning toward her and motioning with my head at the door.

She looks quickly. "Oh, *that* man again!" she says. "Vera, push the button, push the button." She waves her hand toward the call button clipped to Dad's blanket.

"Push the button?" I say.

"Yes, *push the button*," she says. "Someone will come and get him."

Mr. Henderson groans. I reach over and push the button. "What's wrong with him?"

"He goes through Daddy's drawers," my mother says.

"He comes in and sits looking at me," Dad says.

"God forbid," I say. We watch Mr. Henderson trying to move, pushing and then pulling at the wheel of his chair. He grunts with the effort. I should do something—go give him a hand, alert a nurse. "Is the light on?" I lean over to peer at the light beside my father's bed.

"Yes, it's on," my mother says. "They can see it in the hall. You have to wait."

"Sometimes they don't answer for half an hour," my father says.

"*What* are you saying, Bill?" my mother asks.

"He says sometimes they don't answer for half an hour," I say loudly. "That's terrible. What if you need to go to the bathroom?"

"I wait," my father says. "They have other people to take care of."

"He has an accident," my mother says.

"I'm never one of the others," Dad says.

Mr. Henderson has managed to back out of the doorway, and I catch a glimpse of the back of his chair as he starts rolling himself up the hall.

"You're what, Bill?" my mother says, leaning toward him.

"Never one of the others."

"Never one of the others!" She frowns at him. "*What* are you talking about?"

If Lucifer himself sat down to design a hell for Me Old Dad, this would surely be it: my father, descendant of Irish talkers, long a long-story teller himself, a long-winded lecturer, a writer and reciter of poetry, a declaimer of the Chaucerian English he learned to *rede* and *speke* thanks to the GI Bill, an actor and a director of Shakespeare's plays and an admirer of the sonnets, a man who often sang in a lovely tenor that he came to the garden alone, can barely speak above a whisper, clearly, or for long.

During the last two years he and my mother lived together, they were the Jack & Mrs. Sprat of miscommunication: he couldn't speak, she couldn't hear.

For her, the inability to hear him may have been a bit of heaven on earth after fifty-odd—*very* odd—years of listening to him go on.

The smell of beef—really, the *aroma* of beef—has made its way into my father's little pink room. The supper hour approaches. I have eaten food here, and it is quite good; the meat is tender, the coffee is hot, and the vegetables are often surprisingly close to *al dente*. Of course, that last—*al dentism*—is something my father can no longer appreciate. Nor, really, is tenderness an issue in meat that is puréed. And by the time the cup is lifted, the straw properly inserted, and sufficient vacuum pressure applied to draw liquid into his mouth, his coffee has had a chance to cool. But for his first few months here, before his ability to lift food to his mouth and swallow it had declined to its present sorry state, Dad was able to enjoy the Home's carefully prepared meals: a bit of crunch in his chicken salad, a crispy crust of breadcrumbs on his Friday filet of sole, buttered toast that was (astonishingly!) still hot when his breakfast tray arrived.

Along with the fragrance of beef comes Martin. "I see your light is on, Mr. Williams," he says. "Can I get you anything?"

LANDSCAPE WITH DEER AND FIGURE

If you listen, you can hear them chewing
before you see them standing or sitting—
with slim legs and branching antlers—
eating together like children, or the souls
of children, no one animal his own,
as I am my own, watching them watch me,
feeling a fever mount in my forehead,
where all that I am is borne and is effaced
by a herd of deer gathered in the meadow—
like brown ink splashed on rice paper—
abstract, exalted, revealing the eternal harmony,
for only five or six moments, of obligation to family,
manifested with such frightful clarity and beauty
it quells the blur of human feeling.

—HENRI COLE

Henri Cole's fifth collection of poetry, Middle Earth, will be published in April. He is the poet-in-residence at Smith College.

"No," my father says. "It was Mr. Henderson."

"It was that man who comes in here," my mother says.

Martin smiles. "I saw Mr. Henderson coming away from this room," he said. "I thought, Maybe that is why Mr. Williams has his light on!"

We all laugh in delight. Happy hour is nearing its close.

"Supper is on the way, Mr. Williams," Martin says. "I will be helping you tonight, you and Mrs. Salamone and Mrs. Wolf across the hall."

"Oh, good," my mother says. "He'll like that. Won't you, Bill?" She leans forward. "You like Martin to feed you, don't you?"

"I like *you* to feed me," my father says.

She frowns and turns her ear toward his mouth. "What?"

"I like you to feed me," he says again.

She shakes her head and looks at me.

"He likes *you* to feed him," I say.

She sits back. "Bill, I have to take *Vera* home and feed *her*," she says. She looks at Martin. "I have to take my baby home and feed *her* supper!"

"Ah," Martin says. "This is your baby?" He smiles at me.

"My little baby," my mother says.

I glance at my father, who stares expressionlessly at me. "I know, I know," I whisper, "you'd hate to be hanging by your thumbs since I was a baby." His mouth moves; he's sticking his tongue out at me. I stick mine out at him.

"I, too, am my mother's baby," Martin says. "She will always think so."

We smile at each other, big baby, old baby. He can't be more than twenty-five. As I smile, I hear a *craaack* as the thin lines that have begun to erode the edges of my lips gain another millimeter.

"I will be back in a little bit," Martin says.

"Time to head out, Mom?" I say.

"I guess so," she says. She is blotting saliva from the sleeve of my father's shirt.

I put the cork back in the neck of the Beaujolais bottle. Not much is left, but I lift it and say jovially, "*This* goes home with *us*!"

"Bill, how's your wine supply?" my mother says.

"Fine," he says. "*Fine*."

It's written on his chart: *6 ounces of wine with evening meal*. Every couple of weeks someone rolls my father downstairs to the business office, where he withdraws nine dollars from his personal-expenses account, and someone—Jennifer, Kathy, my mother—replenishes his wine supply.

It's not a bad life: beautiful women to bathe and dress and toilet you, a man with a musical voice to feed you your purée, six ounces of cheap white wine with every evening meal.

Or is it?

The evening meal arrives, borne into the room by Heather from Dietary. "Hul-lo, Mr. Williams," she says, wait-

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ing for my mother to whisk away the little plastic cups before she places the tray on his table.

"Hello, Heather," my father says.

"Hello, Heather," my mother says. "Thank you, Heather."

"You're welcome, Mrs. Williams," Heather says. She lifts the covers off the dishes and carries them out the door.

"Let's see what you've got," my mother says, leaning over the tray. On the dinner plate are three lovely scoops of supper: one brown, one white, one orange. On another plate is a little golden ball of dessert.

"Did someone make that or do it?" I ask.

"Did it," my father says.

"They do it down in the kitchen," my mother says. She's peering at the weekly menu taped to my father's door. "Rib-eye steak, potatoes, carrots. Apple pie. Do you want me to get you started?"

"I'll go get the car," I say. "Mom, I'll meet you out front."

"All right, dear." She's loading a spoon with a bolus of mashed potatoes. "I'll just get Daddy started. If Martin has to feed three of them, he won't get here for a while."

"I'm never one of the others," Dad says.

"Good night, Dad," I say, and kiss the top of his old white head. "See you tomorrow."

But his attention is focused on the mashed potatoes now zeroing in on his mouth.

"Mom, I'm going," I say.

LOVE WORK

My love, travel to me quickly for time
strikes like a ruler slapped on a pupil's hand.
Put work aside, worry, too, all the Midwest
Presbyterian principles I once loved you for
and still do. I have learned there's more
to our being here, so tenuous and brief,
than securing sums for retirement. After that, we'll be
past caring about all we own save each other,
hand to hand, and what we may have stored
from the grind, grit, from gratifying sweet
instances, compounded through desire and will.
Tick tick goes the time clock. I hear it
in the recent statements of our industry,
collected fast in a binder like a rebuke.

—GARDNER MCFALL

Gardner McFall is the author of The Pilot's Daughter (1996), a collection of poems, and the editor of Made With Words, a prose miscellany by May Swenson.

"All right, dear," she says, not looking away from her work. "Chew, Bill. Chew. Now swallow."

Heather and the supper cart are disappearing around a distant corner as I start back up the hall. I nearly collide with Martin as he emerges from the room next door. We laugh.

"Good night," I say.

"Good night," he says, and he enters my father's room.

In each room that I pass, an old person (or two) sits upright (mostly), gazing at the bright colors jittering on the screen at the end of the bed. "Help me," Mrs. Kennedy calls, from her own room now, and I hear someone say, "What do you need, Violet? Here is your apple pie."

Night has fallen. The automatic doors close with a firm *whump* behind me, and I walk down the sidewalk past the brightly lit windows in the rehab wing. Even though these inhabitants will not be here forever, they have no more modesty than the lifers; in nighties or johnnies, they are perched in beds or on chairs in front of trays, watching Emeril cook gumbo, unconcerned that their curtains are open. Perhaps they assume that no one would bother to look in.

The parking lot is nearly empty; not many people visit the Home in the dark. I unlock my car and then walk past it to stand at the edge of the asphalt, staring at the obscurity under the trees. For fifty years I have been coming to the Cape and going away again. My father came and went before me, but is here for the duration now. His father did the same, and lies among others in the ground a few miles away.

What would they do without me? And as if my breath had touched a frosted pane of glass, I suddenly see clearly that whatever it is, they *are* doing it without me. I'm on my own.

A blade of wind slips out of the woods and scrapes my cheeks. I love the beach, the dunes, the ceaseless roar of the wine-dark sea, but this is the Cape to me: Sharp breeze in the oaks, staggering pitch pines, the rank essence of last year's leaves. Faint fragrance of skunk, and a rustling in the underbrush as it pokes its sharp nose into the hummocks of spongy humus that leaves and sand have slowly, slowly manufactured together. A thin moon. Crisp, impassive stars.

There is something like happiness here in the dark.

"Vera?" My mother is standing at the end of the sidewalk, shading her eyes as she peers into the pink light of the nearly vacant parking lot. "Vera?"

"Coming, Mother," I shout. "Coming, Mom." I start back to the car.

Has she heard me? For all I know, she thinks I'm the wind. ▀

Alison Baker is the author of How I Came West, and Why I Stayed (1993) and Loving Wanda Beaver (1995). She lives in southern Oregon.

SPECIAL ADVERTISING SECTION



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*** THE 2002 SERVICE TO AMERICA MEDALS

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Could you make a difference and contribute to the greater good by working for the federal government? Far too often, Americans say the answer is no, believing that government offers only dead-end jobs.

That's an understandable view, one rooted in the anti-government politics of recent times. But it's a view that fails to recognize that the federal government has many thousands of employees whose jobs are as varied, interesting, and important as any in our society. Many of these jobs are essential to national security, public safety, and public health.

And government's recruiting needs are growing, as a huge cohort of baby boomers prepares to retire from jobs in federal agencies. David Walker, comptroller general of the United States and head of the General Accounting Office, has said that this "human capital crisis" is among the most critical issues facing the federal government.

The Service to America Medals program described in these pages is one response to the problem facing the public sector. The program is an initiative of *Government Executive*, *National Journal*, and *The Atlantic Monthly*, all owned by Atlantic Media Company, and of the Partnership for Public Service, a nonprofit organization dedicated to recruiting and retaining excellence in the federal civil service.

Our hope is that the stories of medal winners—people who have led interesting lives and made great achievements in service to the country—will inspire other Americans to consider working for Uncle Sam.

Government Executive magazine runs the medals program along with the Partnership for Public Service and produced this special section. The monthly magazine examines the operations of the huge executive branch of the federal government. For many years, *Government Executive* has been describing the growing problems that agencies face when they try to find the highly trained workers they need to meet the demands of our complex and technology-dependent society.

National Journal, which also is publishing this special section, is a weekly magazine devoted to detailed analysis of politics and policy development in our national government. Its subscribers are the people who shape the policies enacted by Congress and the President.

The Atlantic Monthly, of course, has helped shape the debate on key national issues ever since taking up the fight against slavery nearly 150 years ago.

Reaching more than a million people, including many thought leaders in our country, these three publications hope to raise the visibility of what is manifestly an important problem in American government.

We are indebted to the Partnership for Public Service for essential contributions to the program, which culminated in a black-tie dinner in Washington in November of 2002 to honor the winners. The Partnership is an initiative of Samuel Heyman, who worked in government during the Kennedy Administration and who sees an opportunity now to help rekindle the spirit of public service that burned so brightly then.

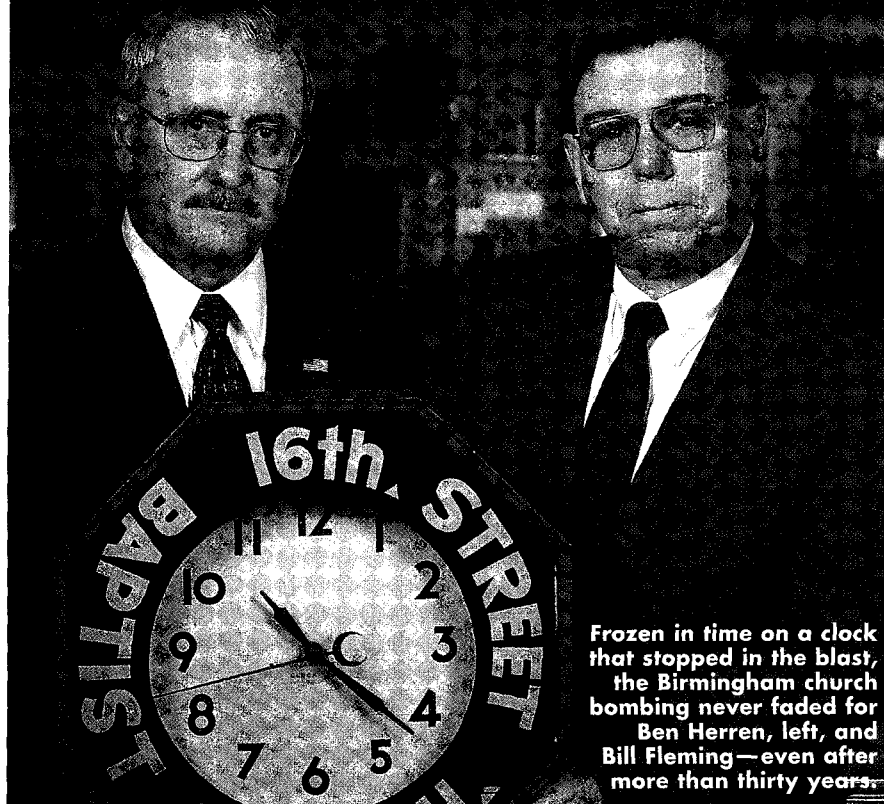
The Service to America Medals program was supported in 2002 by six public-spirited corporations. Siemens Corporation made an early and major commitment to the program, as a National Founding Sponsor. Capital Founding Sponsors include the Lockheed Martin, Monster, PeopleSoft, Unisys, and Visa USA companies. We are very grateful for the essential support they have provided.

Dead-end jobs in lethargic bureaucracies? Perhaps there are some, but they are not the ones described here. We hope you will agree, as you read about the medal winners for 2002, that these people have made great contributions to important national goals. They are interesting people working in fascinating jobs, devoting their waking hours to serving the American public.

Timothy B. Clark
Editor, *Government Executive*



FEDERAL EMPLOYEES OF THE YEAR



Frozen in time on a clock that stopped in the blast, the Birmingham church bombing never faded for Ben Herren, left, and Bill Fleming—even after more than thirty years.

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SERVING JUSTICE

Nearly forty years
and three investigations
after one of the
worst hate crimes in
U.S. history, two
determined FBI
investigators finally
closed the case.

If you ask William Fleming or Ben Herren about the role they played in putting Thomas Blanton and Bobby Frank Cherry behind bars, they'll tell you they were just doing their jobs. They'll tell you about courageous witnesses, brilliant federal prosecutors, and the dedicated staff at the FBI's Birmingham, Alabama, field office, where they work as criminal investigators. They'll tell you about their admiration for the families of four young girls brutally murdered in a crime so hateful it still outrages them. They're much less comfortable telling you how, after nearly four decades of failed efforts, they brought the killers to trial, and, ultimately, to justice.

Herren, now forty-nine, grew up in Birmingham and was just ten years old on the warm Sunday in September of 1963 when a bomb ripped a hole in the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, killing four young girls and injuring twenty others. Birmingham in those days was known as "Bombingham" due to nearly fifty racially motivated bombings across the city in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The church was a spiritual, social, and political center for blacks in a city terrorized by the Ku Klux Klan. While it was shamefully easy for most Americans to overlook the racial disparity in the Deep South, the mutilated

corpses of four girls who had been preparing for Sunday worship galvanized the civil rights movement.

As it turned out, finding and convicting the killers would take much longer than ending segregation. Almost immediately, FBI investigators focused on four suspects, but witnesses refused to testify, fearing Klan retaliation. The prospect of a white jury convicting whites of killing blacks based on circumstantial evidence was so remote that the FBI closed the case in 1968 without bringing charges. In the early 1970s, the state reopened the case, and, with new evidence provided by relatives of one of the suspects, a jury in 1977 convicted Robert Chambliss for his role in the crime and sentenced him to life in prison. He died there eight years later. Another suspect died in 1994. Then, in 1995, Robert Langford, a former Marine who then headed the FBI's Birmingham office, met with community leaders. Why not take another look at the case? No one believed Chambliss had acted alone, and the unsolved crime pricked at the city's conscience.

Fleming was less than delighted when he was put on the thirty-year-old case with no new leads: "I wondered, 'Why are they wasting me like this?'" Herren, at the time a Birmingham police detective, was assigned to work with the FBI. "I like to think my lieutenant thought I was the best detective she had, but I may have been the one she wanted to get rid of," he says.

For months, they read the case files—more than 140 volumes of data. "You go through it page by page," Fleming says. "I was surprised we didn't get some kind of carpal tunnel syndrome." Both had been hoping to find flaws in the records that might provide new leads; instead they were impressed by the thoroughness of the original investigation.

For five years, they worked the case, interviewing and re-interviewing those witnesses still living (more than 130 had died), tracking down new witnesses, checking and rechecking alibis. They added thirty-five new volumes of data to the file. Herren retired from the Birmingham Police Department in 1997 and went to work for the FBI the next day. Fleming, now fifty-seven, canceled his retirement plans. They postponed vacations, gave up fishing trips, missed wedding anniversaries.

Their determination paid off. In May of 2001, a jury sentenced Blanton, then sixty-two years old, to life in prison. Last May, Cherry, at seventy-one, received the same sentence. Until the verdicts were read, neither Fleming nor Herren would believe they had succeeded.

By Katherine McIntire Peters

*** CAREER ACHIEVEMENT MEDAL



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STAR POWER

Katharine Gebbie didn't want to spend her life modeling stars she'd never see. So she created a world-class laboratory and nurtured her own star scientists.

At first, Katharine Gebbie might remind you of a favorite great aunt, or your high school English teacher. She is thin, almost frail-looking, with golden-gray hair pulled into a neat bun. Her graceful manner and perfect posture are matched by speech so soft and precise you mourn the fact that so few people really know how to use language anymore. But then she starts talking about planetary nebulae and thermodynamic equilibrium and modeling stellar atmospheres. That's when you realize Katharine Gebbie is like no one you've ever met.

Gebbie is an astrophysicist by training, but that only begins to explain who she is. She was born on the Fourth of July in 1934. Her father was a Boston lawyer and her mother a homemaker. In an era when few women continued their education after high school, she followed in the footsteps of her mother and two aunts and went to Bryn Mawr College. She majored in physics—the path taken by one of her aunts and namesake, Katharine Blodgett, the first woman to receive a degree in physics from Cambridge University, and a pioneer in film technology.

She studied astronomy and earned her Ph.D. in physics from University College London. Along the way she married a Scots physicist. While her career took her back and forth between London and the Joint Institute for Laboratory Astrophysics (JILA), a cooperative enterprise between the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) and the University of Colorado in Boulder, she still managed to take time out for hiking trips to Nepal, Turkey, and Kashmir. In her spare time, she explored North America, piloting her mother's airplane.

In 1968, she settled in JILA's Quantum Physics Division, where she focused on solar physics. In time, that would become limiting.

"I couldn't see spending the rest of my life modeling stars that you might never see," she says. As NIST began to focus more on providing support to industry, she realized astrophysics wasn't going to be a high priority for the organization, so she moved to NIST headquarters in Gaithersburg, Maryland, to work on the director's staff. She had a ball.

After a stint as chief of the Quantum Physics Division in Boulder, she again returned to Gaithersburg to help with a major reorganization of the agency. In 1991, she became chief of NIST's new Physics Laboratory, where she has created a world-class organization. Among the laboratory's many accomplishments, it has produced two Nobel Prize winners for breakthroughs in physics.

"I've been accused of supporting stars," Gebbie says. "It's paid off."

"She creates a tremendously positive work environment," says Donald Sullivan, chief of the Laboratory's Boulder-based Time and Frequency Division. Employees and colleagues describe her as fearless and committed to excellence.

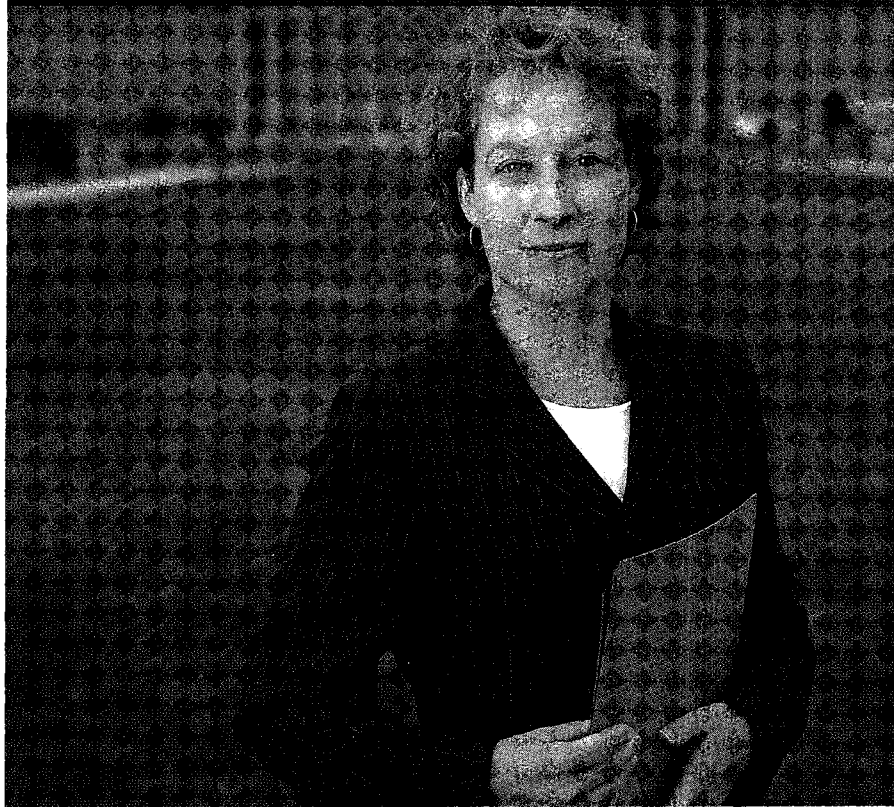
"She's one of the gutsiest managers I've worked for, in the sense that she eliminated an entire division and combined divisions, and there were big egos involved," Sullivan says.

Her gutsiness comes naturally, perhaps. In her senior year of college, Gebbie's father went missing in a small plane in Costa Rica. He had taken up flying at the age of fifty—so that he might never grow old, she says. While fainter-hearted souls might have sworn off flying after such a tragedy, Gebbie became an avid pilot. Perhaps that too is in her blood. Her mother stopped flying only after she turned seventy-four. Gebbie is only seventy.

By Katherine McIntire Peters



CALL TO SERVICE MEDAL



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RAPID ASCENT

After just two
years of service,
Rachel Billingslea
strides the
world stage.

Monkeys swung from the rafters that buttressed the high, arched ceiling. Their sharp odor mingled with the smell of burning cow dung that permeated the hot, muggy air. But Rachel Billingslea was undeterred. Much of her professional energy for the previous two years had been spent preparing for this moment in Delhi, India, in December of 2001. Standing at a podium, she had ten minutes to summarize U.S. missile defense policy and make a proposal to top officials in the Indian Ministry of Defense.

Despite the heat and the stench, and the row of Indian officials staring at her, the twenty-six-year-old kept her cool. And when Billingslea finished her briefing, the Indian officials were speechless.

Few others Billingslea's age—she is now twenty-seven—could say they have briefed ministers in Delhi, smoothed ruffled feathers in Tokyo, worked on defense relations in Tel Aviv—and prepared the secretary of defense for White House meetings.

Billingslea grew up in Montgomery, Alabama, but she always had a wide worldview. Her family talked about international affairs at the dinner

table. She studied Japanese in high school and spent a year abroad in Tokyo during college. In 1999, she earned a graduate degree in public policy from Harvard and became a presidential management intern at the State Department. After a year at State, she accepted a job as a GS-11 foreign affairs specialist in the Defense Department's policy shop.

At State and the Pentagon, Billingslea came to believe that cooperating with India on missile defense could help bolster America's relationship with the world's largest democracy and eventually help stabilize the region.

In 2001, she drafted a paper recommending initial steps the United States and India could take to foster cooperation on missile defense. Her position was—and is—controversial. But she defended her paper up the chain of command. Eventually, top administration officials approved the first few steps in her proposal, including briefings for Indian officials and a war game involving Indian and American military personnel.

At the Indian Ministry of Defense, as the agenda closed in on her presentation, Billingslea passed a note to the highest-ranking American at the meeting. Who was supposed to make the official offer of the initial steps? she asked. He passed a note back. You make the offer.

Putting such a proposal on the table was no small matter. American-Indian relations had soured after India conducted nuclear tests in 1998. Signaling a willingness to cooperate on missile defense was a significant shift, and the Indians at the meeting understood this.

As Billingslea described U.S. missile defense policy, she didn't know that a few months later she would be hosting the Indians for a missile defense briefing in Washington. She didn't know she soon would be in Colorado Springs, overseeing a missile defense war game with Indian and American military participants. She was just trying to get through the speech, and to ignore the heat and the smell.

When Billingslea stopped talking, the Indians were silent.

At the end of the table, opposite the podium at which Billingslea stood, a top aide to the Indian minister of defense removed his glasses. He paused. Then he repeated back the steps she had outlined and asked if he had heard correctly. Billingslea said yes.

We welcome this, he said.

By Brian Friel



HERO OF SEPTEMBER 11TH MEDAL



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STANDING TALL

Kenneth Concepcion loomed large in the effort to coordinate the evacuation of lower Manhattan on September 11.

At 10:30 A.M., Tuesday, September 11, 2001, mass confusion reigned on Pier 11 in lower Manhattan. Just twenty minutes earlier, the south tower of the World Trade Center had collapsed. The top floors of the north tower were engulfed in flames. All bridges and tunnels to the island were closed to vehicles. Water was the quickest way out.

Thousands of people rushed to the pier, about ten blocks from the World Trade Center, to climb aboard the ferries, barges, and other vessels that had pulled in to offer assistance. It was difficult to see as a cloud of smoke created by the burning tower's collapse wafted over the pier. Although New York City police and other emergency personnel were on hand, no one seemed to be in charge.

That's when Kenneth Concepcion arrived at Pier 11 from his Coast Guard station on Staten Island. He expected a nightmarish scene, but Concepcion was the perfect man to impose calm. Pilots from the private vessels rushing to help with the evacuation and officials from the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey knew Concepcion because he headed the U.S. Flag Deepdraft Vessels and Plan Review, which was

responsible for setting safety regulations for ships coming into the harbor.

"As soon as I got there I identified myself to the police, transportation officials, and the Port Authority," Concepcion recalls. Standing at more than six feet tall, he has a commanding presence. Although he wasn't wearing a Coast Guard uniform—after a twelve-year career in the service, he was working in a civilian job for the agency—Concepcion quickly brought organization to the chaos.

"When you tower over the crowd and have a deep booming voice, people pay attention," says Commander Daniel Ronan, chief of waterways management in the Coast Guard's New York office. "He is not shy. He is going to go out there and tell people what the plan is."

Concepcion quickly organized people into lines based on where they needed to go. He stayed in constant contact with the command ship floating in the New York harbor, directing boats into the pier's five slips. By roughly 4 P.M., more than 70,000 people had been evacuated from lower Manhattan via Pier 11.

"I just saw that something needed to be done," Concepcion says. "I could see that the boats were jockeying for position. City officials had no radios to communicate with them. They didn't know the pilots. People were rushing to get on any boat they could ... If anyone questioned me, I said, 'This is the way it is going to be.'"

After the evacuation, Concepcion turned to getting the port back in operation. During the next two days, he ensured that cargo vessels carrying fuel and other supplies critical to the economy along the East Coast could enter the port.

Concepcion also developed a security plan enabling more than 130 passenger vessels to gain access to the port, allowing commuters to get back to lower Manhattan. He also took the initiative to develop a training program for law enforcement officials who had to board and inspect ships. Few of those people knew the nooks and crannies of the vessels as well as Concepcion. He showed them where potential terrorists could hide and where it was safe to fire a weapon.

Concepcion, at fifty, is applying those same leadership skills at the Transportation Security Administration, where he is now chief of the new agency's Maritime Branch.

"In the field, you always wonder what the people in headquarters are thinking," he says. "It was time to put up or shut up."

By Matthew Weinstock

*** SOCIAL SERVICES MEDAL



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using the CPI, is incredibly low, Weinberg says. Weinberg's experimental poverty measures include more realistic costs of living and sources of income than does the poverty threshold.

Before Weinberg came to Census in 1989, he'd spent nearly ten years studying poverty as an analyst and eventually an assistant secretary at the Health and Human Services Department. For decades, federal poverty grants were based solely on the ten-year population count. Because the information was so infrequent, it was of little use. Weinberg helped find a better way to target aid. Since 1993, his Census office has released an annual poverty report using experimental measures taken at the county level. Now, reports are also released by individual school districts.

Despite receiving accolades such as a 1995 Commerce Department Bronze Medal and government reinvention "Hammer" awards from then Vice President Al Gore in 1998 and 1999, Weinberg is modest about his contributions. He won't take credit for helping redefine poverty, or for how his

STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

The nation's poor are more than just a statistic to Daniel Weinberg, whose poverty data help agencies target financial aid.

More than thirty years ago, Daniel Weinberg went to war; he hasn't returned. Weinberg was fifteen when President Lyndon Johnson declared unconditional war on poverty and urged every American to rescue those who lived "on the outskirts of hope."

Weinberg took the call to heart. Today, nearly forty years after Johnson's emphatic summons, reasonable people argue about whether the war on poverty has succeeded or failed. And when they do, they often use Weinberg's data to make their case.

Weinberg, at fifty-two, is a member of the Senior Executive Service and chief of the Census Bureau's Housing and Household Economic Statistics Division. He's also the nation's lead intelligence-gatherer on the lives of the poor. Weinberg pioneered a new method for measuring poverty that augments the official figures Census produces. For more than thirty years, the official government indicator, known as the poverty threshold, has been based solely on the consumer price index (CPI).

The poverty threshold for a family of four was just under \$18,000 last year. That figure, derived

reports have changed policy. "We're providing the outlines of the playing field, what the data show about the world," Weinberg says. "Let the policy-makers argue about the issues, not the data."

Weinberg chose his profession in reaction to political upheaval in the 1960s. In 1968, he enrolled as a mathematics student at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Televised images of race riots in urban California stuck in his mind. "Cities were where the action was," he recalls. "I decided very early that I was more interested in what happened to people," than in macro level trends. "I followed that by trying to focus on the poor."

Census gathers poverty data in much the same way as it counts heads—by talking to people face to face. Weinberg still meets with those whose life stories make up his poverty report. Through his work, Weinberg says, he can help people understand what it's really like to be poor in America today.

But ever the evenhanded mathematician, Weinberg won't advocate policy changes. When asked if the lives of the poor are better now than at the dawn of the war on poverty, Weinberg falls back on science. "I think we have some better measures than we did forty years ago."

He would know.

By Shane Harris

JUSTICE MEDAL



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CRACKDOWN

Hot on the trail of
drug smugglers,
Robert Rutherford
harnesses the power
of law enforcement
agencies to clean up
the Miami River docks.

In the parochial world of law enforcement, it takes a special kind of cop to admit his agency needs help. It takes an evangelist to get it.

Bobby Rutherford had to be a little of both to crack the drug-smuggling rings that terrorized the Miami River in the mid-1990s.

The river starts downtown and empties into the Port of Miami, providing easy access to the city for small barges and freighters. Smugglers saw it as a direct route to funnel drugs into South Florida.

As a veteran criminal investigator for the Customs Service, Rutherford knew the river, and he knew the smugglers' methods. But he didn't have the manpower or the budget to make a dent in their business. All he had was an idea.

Rutherford knew the riverfront was rife with people who had information on the smugglers. Some of these people were wanted on local criminal charges or immigration violations. If they could be taken into custody, Customs could leverage these charges to make them informants. But first they had to be arrested, which meant Rutherford had to get law enforcement agencies with jurisdiction to play along. Many of these agencies had their own personnel shortages.

In late 1998, Rutherford pigeonholed longtime

colleagues in the Border Patrol and the Miami-Dade Police Department. Root out the drugs, and we'll cut crime along the riverfront, he told them. Everybody will win. Then he chatted up their bosses. "You've basically got to go out and talk to other agencies and get them excited about wanting to do it," says Rutherford.

Soon eight agencies had signed on to the sting, dubbed Operation Riversweep. Uniformed agents from Customs and other agencies made dozens of arrests in the shipyards and developed top-notch sources. When the sting ended, in early 2000, Customs had made 120 arrests and seized more than 13,000 pounds of cocaine and twenty-one freighters.

None of it would have happened without Bobby Rutherford. "He's a real bulldog," says Customs special agent Dennis McLean. "He sets himself on a course and very few people can sway him off it."

Rutherford, a forty-year-old GS-14, doesn't speak at press conferences. He doesn't go to high-level meetings, even when they involve operations he runs. He spends his time in the shipyards or out on the river, working cases.

But Rutherford's ideas are widely respected inside Customs and have had a profound influence on narcotics investigations in South Florida. Even officials in the Florida Office of Drug Control, which has occasionally chafed with Customs over joint operations, are quick to praise his abilities. "He's very, very knowledgeable about catching smugglers," says one.

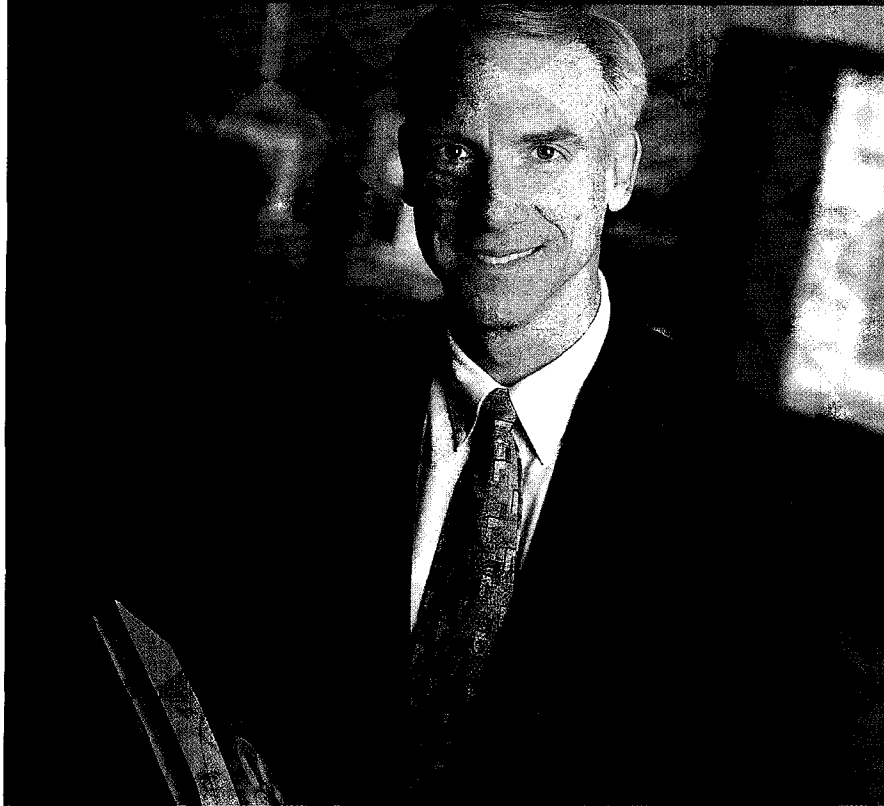
He wasn't always. The son of an Air Force sergeant, Rutherford grew up in Memphis, Tennessee, far from a teeming urban center like Miami. He earned a master's degree in international relations, but then decided to act on an interest in police work that had developed while he was an undergraduate at the University of Memphis. After a stint with the police department in Panama City, Florida, he joined the Customs Service as an investigator in 1987.

Rutherford dived into the details of his new job, learning the ins and outs of smuggling techniques. His great talent, says McLean, is connecting the dots between seemingly unrelated pieces of evidence. In Riversweep, he won the trust of the different law enforcement groups involved. "He got consensus because he was successful," says McLean.

Today, Rutherford and his staff still work six-day weeks, often twelve hours a day. "For what I do this is the best place in the country to be. It's a lot of fun."

By Jason Peckenpaugh

*** NATIONAL SECURITY AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS MEDAL



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LEADING THE WAY

Alfred League's keen sense of direction fosters innovation in mapping among his team of scientists and technologists.

Even as a child, Alfred League wanted answers. On family vacations, the future federal cartographer would pester his parents to see road maps so he would know where they were going. "I guess it kind of carried through," says League, now forty-three, who has spent two decades in government helping a wide range of map users—from the Salt Lake City Olympics security force to Army helicopter pilots in Afghanistan—find their way.

But it's not just mapmaking that won League, a GS-15, respect from his colleagues and rave reviews from his customers. He has built a unique technology think tank within the National Imagery and Mapping Agency (NIMA) that encourages creativity among seventy scientists, analysts, and technologists. And their advances have enhanced national security from the nation's capital to the battlefields of southwest Asia.

"League is an exceptionally motivated and dynamic leader who has single-handedly, with limited resources, collaboratively created several technological innovations that have earned him and NIMA an outstanding reputation," says

League's boss, James Godfrey, the agency's director of research and development.

As he once pressed his parents for answers, League now constantly pushes his colleagues to come up with better ways to provide maps, digital images, and other geospatial information.

"The environment he has created is what is needed in research, development, test, and evaluation," says Damien Kerr, an imagery and geospatial scientist who works with League for NIMA's Geospatial Intelligence Advancement Test Bed in Bethesda, Maryland. "You can take risks here and have the freedom to think outside of the box. He lets people come to him with ideas that a traditional manager would not think of."

League says innovation often means determining what customers need before they ask for it. On September 11, League didn't wait around for rescue workers to ask his office to come up with imagery of the disaster sites at the Pentagon and in New York. Instead, League had test-bed scientists and analysts draw upon experimental technology to provide interactive imagery of the sites, which allowed rescue crews to move more easily around the chaotic scenes. "We knew all the experiments we had been running had to come into the real world real fast," says League.

The war on terrorism has proved fertile ground for creativity among League's pioneers. Traditionally, NIMA has deployed employees to war zones to provide mapping and other geographic information to military commanders. But during Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, League harnessed online computer networks to give troops twenty-four-hour access to digital maps and other imagery that is continually updated at NIMA headquarters. "Is that truly revolutionary? No," League says. "It's just a way of looking at it intuitively."

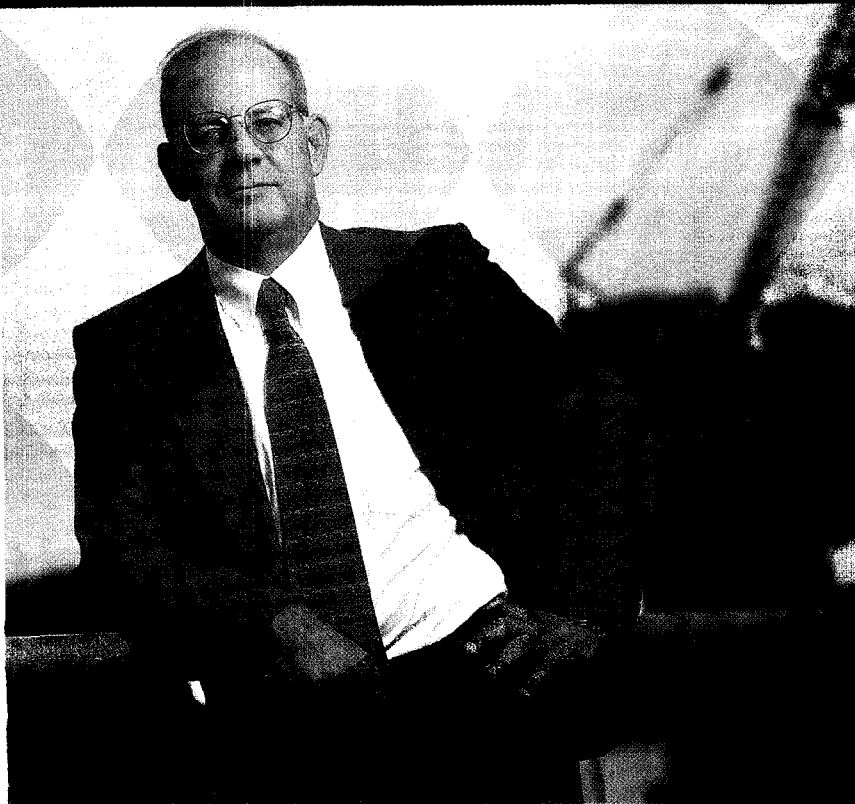
The results offered pilots a digital tool they never had before, contributing to the success in pinpointing al Qaeda targets during the opening weeks of fighting.

League deflects credit for his organization's success, praising his team of computer scientists and analysts for many breakthroughs. (In fact, he notes, he never has received formal computer training.) League likens his workforce to a highly skilled orchestra. "I don't get to play every instrument in the orchestra, but I do the conducting," he adds.

Indeed, League is the maestro.

By George Cahlink

*** ENVIRONMENT, SCIENCE, AND TECHNOLOGY MEDAL



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SWIMMING UPSTREAM

Donald Sweeney
rocks the boat with
some cold, hard facts
that could sink a
\$1 billion project to
boost shipping lanes
on the Mississippi.

Donald Sweeney knows the danger of wading too deep in the waters of the mighty Mississippi River. He's all too familiar with the way the powerful currents beneath the river's glistening surface can drive an unsuspecting traveler off course toward peril's edge.

Yet Sweeney, a fifty-one-year-old mild-mannered GS-13 economist living in St. Louis, also knows that with enough fight and determination even a slight diversion can alter the river's route.

In March of 1993, Sweeney set out to study 800 miles of navigable waters stretching from Minneapolis to Cairo, Illinois, where the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers meet. The six-year, \$26 million project was designed to estimate how much commercial traffic would flow down the river during the next fifty years and how much stress it would put on a system of thirty-six locks and dams. His study became a guide for a \$1 billion Army Corps of Engineers construction project to add more locks. It is the second-largest project in the Corps' history.

"We originally scoped out to do what the Corps had always done—economic analysis that looked at one project at a time," Sweeney says. "As we

progressed, looking at one lock and dam at a time, it became clear that it was not suitable. You have a system of locks and dams. Arrival at one lock relies on and affects arrival at another lock."

By 1996, Sweeney and his team realized they had to change course. They turned to a new model never before used by the Corps or on a project of this magnitude. The idea was to study the lock system and all the alternatives available to shippers.

"What Don's model does better than the models we had been using previously is describe real-world behavior," says Richard Manguno, chief of the Corps' economics branch in New Orleans.

Sweeney found that the Corps' original model vastly overestimated the willingness of users to sit for literally hundreds of hours waiting for a lock to open.

Sweeney's model revealed that shippers were more inclined to find alternative modes of transportation. But those results could have sunk the Corps' massive construction project, so Sweeney was removed from the project in the summer of

1998. Senior Corps officials tinkered with the numbers to come up with the results they wanted.

But a panel of Corps economists reviewing the data questioned the results, especially because they were so different from what Sweeney had found.

Senior officials tried to pass blame onto Manguno, who succeeded Sweeney as economist on the project. They threatened him with disciplinary action if he didn't change the numbers.

"I had to stop this," Sweeney says. "In mid-2000, I wrote an affidavit with loads of background that the Corps had manipulated the numbers." Sweeney filed his affidavit with the Office of Special Counsel, which investigates and prosecutes reprisals for whistle blowing.

In December of 2000, the OSC referred the case to the Army inspector general, who, in November of 2001, affirmed Sweeney's accusations. A separate report by the National Academy of Sciences also concluded that the Corps' data was flawed. (Corps officials did not comment for this story.)

Sweeney's actions provoked debate in Congress over the Corps' approach to transportation projects. "I like to say that courage is often the result of naïveté," he says. "I had no clue this would become such a big thing. I talked to my family about it. I knew my life would never be the same. I'm pretty sure I would do it again."

By Matthew Weinstock

**TO THE STARS WHO HAVE
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BOOKS & CRITICS

THIS MONTH:

The Wifely Duty

"Nowadays, American parents of a certain social class seem squeaky clean, high-achieving, flush with cash, relatively exhausted, obsessed with their children, and somehow—how to pinpoint this?—undersexed." Caitlin Flanagan considers a rash of new books suggesting that many contemporary marriages have experienced a "sexual shutdown."

PAGE 171

The Wartime Toll on Germany

"With a part of themselves, thinking Germans obviously understood that their late Führer not only brought this devastation on them but actually wished it on them. He had preferred an immolated nation to a surrendered one." Christopher Hitchens examines the late W. G. Sebald's visit to "the half-buried past" in *On the Natural History of Destruction*.

PAGE 182

Going to Extremes

"Richard Powers and Nicholson Baker—exact contemporaries (b. 1957), each with an aura of eccentric genius—can be seen by now as the long and the short, the portentous yin and the whimsical yang, of American literary fiction." Thomas Mallon reviews Powers's *The Time of Our Singing* and Baker's *A Box of Matches*.

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NEW & NOTEWORTHY*What to read this month*

BY BENJAMIN SCHWARZ

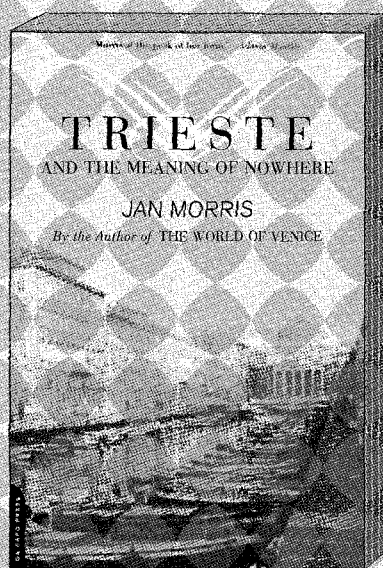
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Argentina was once almost a great nation. In 1929 it was one of the ten richest countries in the world. Thanks largely to universal public schooling, it was populated by a highly educated middle class (by far the largest in Latin America), and was democratically governed. Its capital, Buenos Aires, boasted the greatest opera house and probably the finest publishing firms, newspapers, and universities in the Hispanic world. In fact, the only city in the Western Hemisphere that rivaled it for sophistication was New York—and Buenos Aires, with its broad boulevards and its Beaux Arts architecture, was grander by far. But in retrospect this isolated, European society, built on the extermination of the country's Indians (Argentina's frontier was finally subdued only in the late nineteenth century), and this affluent economy, built on the slaughter of millions of cows, were artificial and tenuous. Since the Great Depression, of course, Argentina has suffered consistent and remarkable economic, political, and societal dysfunction (with the largest number of psychoanalysts per capita, its population is perhaps the world's most neurotic). It has also suffered a period of horrific state violence. A number of recent and creative academic studies in English (most notably those of James Scobie and Daniel James) have probed aspects of this country's tortured and paradoxical past, but this anthology—along with the translated writings of Jorge Luis Borges, and V. S. Naipaul's bleak, hostile, and brilliant essay-portraits of Buenos Aires under the febrile terror of the dirty war (reprinted last year in his *The Writer and the World*)—is the best introduction in English to its history, culture, and society. The editors' lucid introductions and imaginative assemblage of sources, ranging from poems to official reports to comic strips, cover Argentina from the sixteenth century to its current economic crisis. Although the editors—in their predictable efforts to ensure that the voices of the oppressed and the neglected are well represented—are a bit too ready to neglect Argentina's canonical writers and powerful groups (the enormously influential Anglo-Argentine community is ignored), this collection subtly conveys the admirable and loathsome qualities of a complicated and in many ways unfathomable society.

**THE ARGENTINA READER**

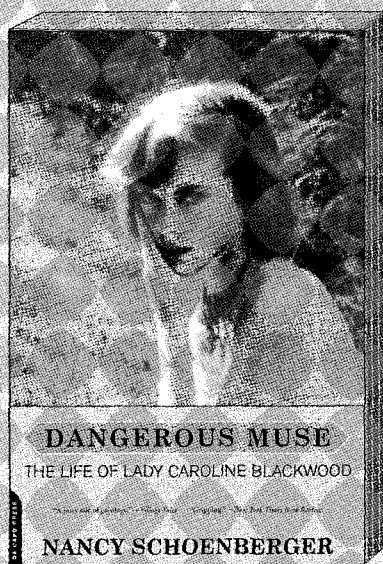
edited by Gabriela Nouzeilles and Graciela Montaldo
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LITERARY STUDIES

THE COLLECTION, by Peter Ackroyd (Vintage UK/Trafalgar Square). No book can be more wearisome than a collection of old reviews, but this one is an exception, and Ackroyd's volume should be put on the shelf with V. S. Pritchett's and Cyril Connolly's critical works. A novelist, a historian, a biographer, and a critic, Ackroyd has an intelligence at once astringent and subtle, and there seems to be no English writer that he has not only read but also assimilated. This gives his criticism a rare historical authority. Sure, read him on such European and American writers as Baudelaire, Calvino, Walter Benjamin, and Edward Dorn—and read him for his biting asides ("[Susan] Sontag refers on occasions to 'strategies of discourse,' by which she means 'the way people write'"). But above all read him on Spenser and Philip Larkin, on Shakespeare and Auden, on Samuel Johnson and Blake, on Macaulay and Milton and Woolf and Coleridge and Dickens. Exquisitely sensitive to the complex dialogue among writers across the centuries, and to the history embedded in the English language, Ackroyd conveys more naturally, and therefore more effectively, than any other critic a sense of English literature as an organic whole—as "an everlasting animal" (to quote Orwell on English culture) "stretching into the future and the past, and, like all living things, having the power to change out of recognition and yet remain the same."

YESTERDAY MORNING, by Diana Athill (Granta Books). Athill, now eighty-five, was once regarded as the best editor of literary fiction in London. This memoir of her "very English childhood"—an upper-middle-class country upbringing, with ponies, books (and a grandmother to read them aloud), kind servants, and impromptu plays in the drawing room—is idyllic without nostalgia or sentiment, owing largely to Athill's nearly pathological honesty. As a child she wondered, "Am I ever going to get away from this awful self-awareness?" and she spares herself no unpleasant truths about her character, conduct, or (the memoir is framed in the present)

physical decline. Especially sharp yet sympathetic is her depiction of her parents' sad and eventually sexless marriage, their endless bickering, and the emotional effects this had on her and her brother. Athill recognizes the limitations of her parents and of the milieu in which she was raised, but from her decent, stiff-upper-lipped elders, who detested lying and who made her accept "without question" certain responsibilities to animals, spring her fearless—heedless—candor and her grit and sense of duty (which, she recounts in a memorable passage, she summoned as a girl to put a suffering hedgehog out of its misery—an act she recalls with residual horror and justifiable pride). I read this book when a pre-publication copy arrived a few months ago, and had decided not to review it (how many English writers can we cover?). But I've found myself unable to forget this gracefully written, clear-eyed, and beguiling reminiscence.

ALDOUS HUXLEY, by Sybille Bedford (Ivan R. Dee). Although the acerbic wit of Huxley's early novels—*Antic Hay*, *Crome Yellow*, and *Point Counter Point*—rivals Waugh's, and although his range and depth as an essayist are breathtaking, his artistic stature doesn't merit a nearly 800-page biography. Which makes Bedford's achievement all the more astonishing. Her book, first published in 1973 and recently reissued, is one of the great literary portraits of the past fifty years—and next to it the forthcoming and perfectly adequate Huxley biography by Nicholas Murray seems superfluous. Rarely can a doorstep biography be described as elegant; an accumulation of quotidian detail almost inevitably bloats and clogs the work. But Bedford (now ninety-one), a cosmopolitan and stylish novelist, maintains a sophisticated and coolly ironic tone (aided by her decision to divide her very long study into many very short chapters) throughout her chronicle. Not only did Huxley—whom Bedford nicely characterizes as "an evolved Victorian Englishman at home in the second part of the twentieth century, at home in Southern California"—know everything, he knew everybody, from Orwell (who

as a fellow schoolboy at Eton was entranced by Huxley's diction) to Charlie Chaplin. Certainly Bedford deftly captures Huxley's multi-faceted mind and world (the two writers were close friends), but what makes her work so singularly absorbing is the complete sympathy she somehow pairs with her characteristic detachment.

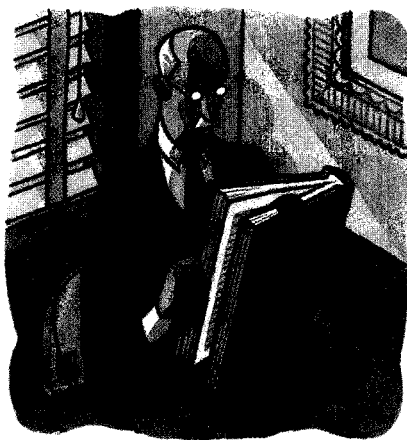
HISTORY

THE JOURNALS OF THE LEWIS AND CLARK EXPEDITION, edited by Gary E. Moulton (University of Nebraska Press).

Numerous writers have recounted the tale of Lewis and Clark's epic exploration of the American West, but the explorers themselves wrote by far the most mesmerizing account. The seven volumes of their journals—written (especially Lewis's) in an elegantly forceful and direct style—and those of the enlisted men of the Corps of Discovery, which make up another three volumes, describe the vast herds of bison on the plains; the ordeal of crossing the Lolo Pass; the awesome sight of the Columbia River gorge and of the vast Pacific; and the tense and intricate interactions between the explorers and Native Americans. These books, in short, make up probably the single greatest adventure story in American history. But more important, they are the apogee of the American Enlightenment, cataloguing and analyzing information and discoveries embracing geography, botany, zoology, astronomy, geology, ethnography, linguistics, and meteorology—and they are thus a memorial to the expedition's sponsor, Thomas Jefferson. It took nearly two centuries to publish a definitive edition of the journals: the hardcover set was completed in 2001. Meticulously edited, with detailed (and absolutely necessary) footnotes, these volumes are a triumph of scholarly publishing. A more affordable ten-volume paperback edition will be published in March, as will a single-volume abridgement by the series' editor, capturing the dramatic story of the Corps's journey through the unknown third of the continent more vividly than the capacious journals, which perforce dwell at length on scientific and geographical details.

One version or another belongs on most readers' shelves—and should accompany any road trip through the West.

ALEXANDER HAMILTON, by Willard Sterne Randall (HarperCollins). Americans lack a great biography of their most brilliant, far-seeing, and dashing Founder, Alexander Hamilton. (This is especially annoying given that even John Adams's effete and neurasthenic great-grandson Henry has been granted not one but two exceptional multi-volume studies.) If, as Progressive historians would have it, American politics was for a century a struggle between Hamiltonians and Jeffersonians, Hamilton's vision of America triumphed long ago. In his *Report on the Public Credit*



and *Report on the Subject of Manufactures* he did nothing less than limn America's capitalist development; and of course the *Federalist Papers* (of which his essays form the bulk) constitutes America's most original contribution to political theory. In short, it is impossible to understand this country without apprehending Hamilton. But the contrast between Hamilton's éclat and the plodding products of his biographers—Forrest McDonald's highly intelligent and lucid, if eccentric, *Alexander Hamilton* (1979) excepted—has been conspicuous. Sadly, Randall's book, flabby and bereft of analysis, fails to break the mold. For a full-scale examination of Hamilton's history and ideas readers should turn to McDonald; but the best portrait of him can be found in Stanley Elkins and Eric McKittrick's magisterial and scintillating *The Age of Federalism* (1993), a somewhat overlooked masterpiece.

GIN, by Patrick Dillon (Justin, Charles & Co.). This harrowing chronicle of England's early-eighteenth-century "gin craze" portrays a society in the grip of an epidemic. Cheap, highly addictive, and deadly, "Madame Geneva," as the drink was called, offered comfort and oblivion to London's slum dwellers ("kill grief" was another of its many nicknames), but the middle and upper classes also succumbed to it. The results were catastrophic—the number of cases of fetal alcohol syndrome alone had to have been appalling. This is the second book in the past year on the subject, and it just edges out Jessica Warner's *Craze*. Dillon's overheated prose suits this tale of mania, particularly in his depiction of the chaotic London underworld, which is more absorbing than his well-researched and involved account of the often venal (no surprise) efforts to control, regulate, or prohibit the drink. Far less successful is his epilogue, in which he draws facile and anachronistic parallels between those efforts on the one hand, and American Prohibition and the war on drugs on the other. Will historians please stop tacking on superficial and "relevant"—and, inevitably, "progressive"—public-policy lessons that mar their careful reconstructions of the past, a notoriously foreign country?

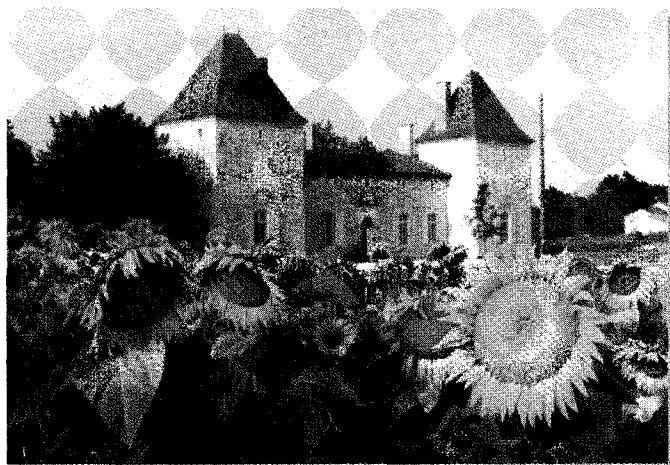
CURRENT AFFAIRS

U.S. NATIONAL DEFENSE FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY, by Edward A. Olsen (Frank Cass).

Almost all books on U.S. foreign policy are jejune, and they fall into two categories: bland recitations of the conventional wisdom (invariably employing the oxymoronic formula that America must maintain its global leadership in "partnership" with its NATO allies), and the blathering of such dissenters as Noam Chomsky and Gore Vidal. The latter group has sold surprisingly briskly since 9/11; presumably readers (especially on college campuses) are searching for a real debate about America's role in the world. But neither Chomsky nor Vidal—both of whose shibboleths have grown as stale as those presented at any Council on Foreign Relations study group—is intellectually

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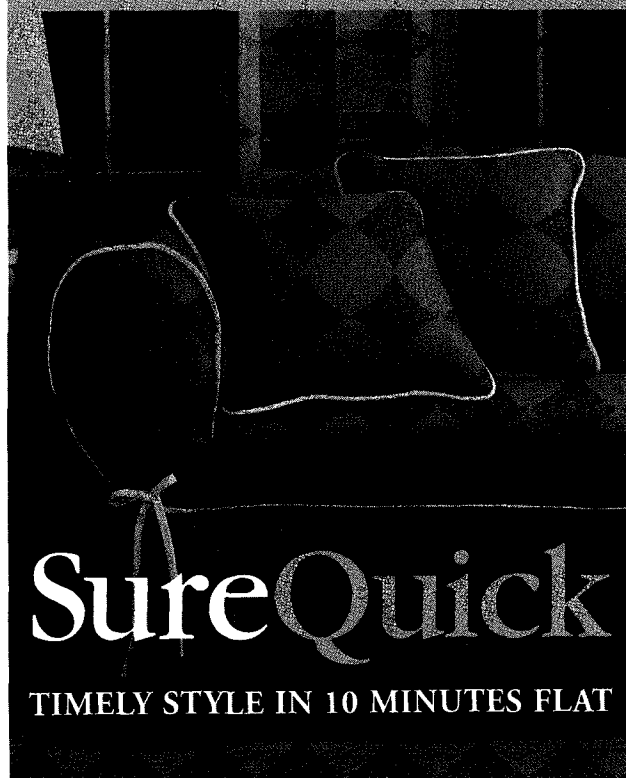
honest or precise enough to supply a rigorous contrarian argument. Olsen is. His detailed analysis and proposals are important and fresh—radical, in fact. A former State Department intelligence analyst, he cogently argues that in foreign policy less is more: America's security will be enhanced if the United States forsakes its hegemonic ambitions and the globe-girdling alliances that accompany them. And although he advocates an aggressive campaign against the perpetrators of the September 11 attacks, Olsen sensibly enough points out (in, alas, typically wooden prose) that "the lower the United States' interventionist military profile abroad, the less the risks will be of attracting terrorists." After all, although both Democratic and Republican leaders orate that terrorists hate us for our freedoms and values, such states as New Zealand and Luxembourg share those freedoms and values yet aren't targets of al Qaeda. Those looking for forceful dissent and a genuine alternative to the foreign-policy status quo should eschew the slim, angry, and slipshod books published by Verso and the New Press and instead examine Olsen's unsentimental non-interventionism.

THE RUSSIA HAND, by *Strobe Talbott* (Random House). Why do books like this get published? Unimaginative and ambitious, Talbott, who was deputy secretary of state in the Clinton Administration and the primary architect of its policy toward Russia, has for decades been an assiduous Washington operator and an unwavering espouser of the establishment position. These memoirs are, predictably, self-important, unrevealing, and self-serving—and the accounts they contain of the two most important issues involving Russia during the Clinton years, NATO enlargement and the alliance's war against Yugoslavia, are so disingenuous and selective that they're misleading almost to the point of dishonesty. To appreciate its shallowness, compare this book with the gracefully brilliant, skeptical, and probing memoirs of another Russia hand (and an opponent of Talbott's NATO policy): George F. Kennan. **A**

Benjamin Schwarz is the literary editor of The Atlantic.

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BOOKS

THE WIFELY DUTY

Marriage used to provide access to sex. Now it provides access to celibacy

BY CAITLIN FLANAGAN

.....

During two strange days in New York last winter, three married people—one after another—confessed to me either that they had stopped having sex or that they knew a married person who had stopped having sex. Like a sensible person, I booked an early flight home and chalked the whole thing up to the magic and mystery that is New York. But no sooner had I put my coat on the peg than it started up again. A number of the mothers in my set began making sardonic comments along similar lines. The daytime talk shows to which I am mildly and happily addicted worried the subject to death, revived it, and worried it some more. Dr. Phil—who, like his mentor Oprah Winfrey, has an uncannily precise sense of what American women in the aggregate are

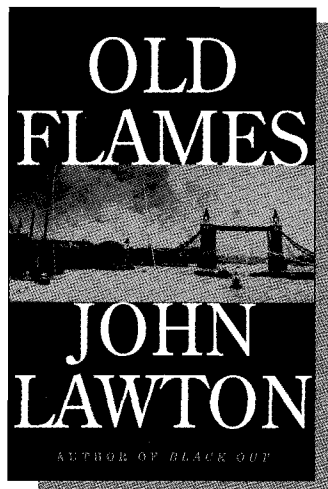
thinking about—noted on his Web site that “sexless marriages are an undeniable epidemic.” Mass-circulation magazines aimed at married women rarely go to press these days without an earnest review of some new sexual technique or gadget, the information always presented in the context of how to relight a long-doused fire. (And I must say that an article in *Redbook* that warns desperate couples away from a product called Good Head Oral Delight Gel—“the consistency is like congealed turkey fat”—deserves some kind of award for service journalism.) Patricia Heaton, a star of *Everybody Loves Raymond*, has published a memoir called *Motherhood and Hollywood*, in which she observes, “Sex? Forget about it. I mean that literally.” Books with titles such as *Okay, So*

I Don't Have a Headache and I'm Not in the Mood have become immediate hits, and another popular book, *For Women Only*, lists various techniques that married women use to avoid sex, from the age-old strategy of feigning sleep to the quite modern practice of taking on household night-owl projects. And Allison Pearson's much loved novel about a busy working mother, *I Don't Know How She Does It* (which opens with the main character engaged in just such a late-night project), features a woman so tired that she's frantic to escape sex with her husband, prompting Margaret Carlson, of *Time* magazine, to observe, “Sleep is the new sex.” It has become impossible not to suspect that a large number of relatively young and otherwise healthy married people are forgoing sex for long periods of time and that many have given it up altogether.

And so we turn our curious attention to the marital therapist Michele Weiner Davis, whose new book, *The Sex-Starved Marriage*, is so well timed and so aptly titled that it is primed to become a cul-

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tural sensation. Davis is not particularly interested in the cause of this strange turn of events, though she tosses around the expected observations about the exhaustion that dogs contemporary working parents and the reduction in lust that has always gone along with marriage. Hers is not a deep-thinking, reflective kind of book but, rather, a get-cracking-and-solve-the-problem kind of book. Solutions? She's armed to the teeth with them. She has

created a "passion-building toolkit" filled with "field-tested" techniques—none of them bad. Although I found Part IV ("Doing It Together") far more appealing than a scary mini-chapter called "The Do-It-Yourself Solution," her notions about how to jump-start the old hanky-panky seem eminently reasonable. Make "romantic overtures," she counsels. A wife might buy some new lingerie; a husband might wear flattering clothes. Most important, though, is a recommendation based on exciting new "research" revealing that for many people, waiting for the urge to strike is pointless; better to bash ahead and hope for the best. Davis asks, "Have

you ever noticed that although you might not have been thinking sexual thoughts or feeling particularly sexy, if you push yourself to 'get started' when your spouse approaches you, it feels good, and you find yourself getting into it?" Many of her clients have received this counsel with enthusiasm. "I really wasn't in the mood for sex at all," reports one of her advisees after just such a night, "but once we got started, it was fun. I really enjoyed it."

What's odd here is not the suggestions themselves—each seems quite sensible, and I myself can vouch for more than one of them—but, rather, the generation that apparently needs them. American adults under the age of fifty tend to know more about sex and its many delightful permutations than did streetwalkers of an earlier century.

When Davis describes the process of arousal ("You notice a feeling of fullness in your pelvic area as your genitals become engorged with blood"), you might think she was addressing a seventh-grade health class rather than adults of the post-sexual-revolution era. Yuppies, with that winsome arrogance that is all their own, proudly describe the nature and frequency of their premarital couplings with a specificity

matched only by advanced seminars on animal husbandry. The reason abortion rights hold such a sanctified position in American political life is that they are a critical component of the yuppie program for maximum personal sexual pleasure. But let these inebriates of nooky enter marriage, a state in which ongoing sexuality often has as much to do with old-fashioned notions of obligation and commitment as it does with the immediate satisfaction of intense physical desire, and they grow as cool and limp as yesterday's Cobb salad.

All of this makes me reflect that those repressed and much pitied 1950s wives—their sexless college years! their boorish husbands, who couldn't locate

the clitoris with a flashlight and a copy of *Gray's Anatomy*!—were apparently getting a lot more action than many of today's most liberated and sexually experienced married women. In the old days, of course, there was the wifely duty. A housewife understood that in addition to ironing her husband's shirts and cooking the Sunday roast, she was—with some regularity—going to have relations with the man of the house. Perhaps, as some feminists would have us believe, these were grimly efficient interludes during which the poor humped-upon wife stared at the ceiling and silently composed the grocery list. Or perhaps not. Maybe, as Davis and her "new" findings suggest, once you get the canoe out in the water, everybody starts happily paddling.

Books discussed in this essay

**I DON'T KNOW HOW
SHE DOES IT**
by Allison Pearson

**THE SEX-STARVED
MARRIAGE**
by Michele Weiner Davis

THE TOTAL WOMAN
by Marabel Morgan

FOR WOMEN ONLY
by Jennifer Berman, M.D.,
and Laura Berman, Ph.D.

**MOTHERHOOD AND
HOLLYWOOD**
by Patricia Heaton

I'M NOT IN THE MOOD
by Judith Reichman, M.D.

**OKAY, SO I DON'T
HAVE A HEADACHE**
by Cristina Ferrare

**THE BITCH IN
THE HOUSE**
edited by Cathi Hanauer

The notion that female sexuality was unleashed forty years ago, after lying dormant to these uncountable millennia, is silly; more recent is the sexual shutdown that apparently takes place in many marriages soon after they have been legalized.

Jane Greer, *Redbook's* online sex therapist, has a thriving midtown-Manhattan practice. When I asked her about what I had been hearing, she told me that she has seen many married couples who have gone without sex for periods of time ranging from six months to six years. Why? "Marriage has changed," she told me. "In the old days the husband was the breadwinner. The wife had the expectation of raising the children and pleasing him. Now they're both working and both taking care of the children, and they're too exhausted and resentful to have sex." I asked Greer the obvious question: If a couple is not having sex because of job pressures and one partner quits working, does the couple have more sex? The answer was immediate and unequivocal: "*Absolutely!*"

And this, of course, is the general plot of *I Don't Know How She Does It*, which has the heroine, Kate Reddy, playing dead in the sack for a world of nights until, at book's end, she resigns from her job and runs into her husband's arms. (We have been pointedly instructed by the author not to imagine that this character is based on her own husband, Anthony Lane, but it's just about impossible not to do exactly that.) "The hug wasn't that dry click of bones you get holding someone when the passion has drained away. It was more like a shadow dance: I still wanted him and I think he wanted me, but we hadn't touched in a very long time." Let us get one thing straight from the outset: despite its rapturous reviews, the book is not artful or literary or—to borrow *Time's* thunderously wrong adjective—"sparkling." It's full of stock characters, including a wise minicab driver who is forever making insightful remarks about the meaning of life. A pigeon family constructs a nest outside Kate's office window and teaches her valuable lessons about motherhood. "Phones may have become cordless," we are lec-

tured, "but mothers never will." When Kate and her husband reconnect in a London coffee shop after a brief, miserable separation, "we both laugh, and for a moment Starbucks is filled with the sound of Us." (Funny, I thought that grating, deafening sound was the coffee grinder.) Still, though, the book has struck a chord—on an episode of *Oprah* devoted to the book Oprah Winfrey introduced it as "the new bible for working mothers." In particular, droves of readers report that the nature of Kate's marriage mirrors theirs exactly.

The dominant feature of Kate's attitude toward her husband—that is, before they resume making the sound of Us—is blistering contempt. Contempt for his work: he is a quietly successful architect, given to building whimsical little structures like Peace Pagodas, a pursuit that leaves him time to make pesto and watch Disney videos with the kids while she strides off to her high-paying, high-pressure job. Contempt for his inability to notice if the family has run out of toilet paper or whether the children are properly dressed for a birthday party. Contempt for his very existence in the household: when he wonders whether it would be such a bad thing if their uncooperative nanny quit, Kate tells him, "Frankly, it would be easier if you left." That the man entertains even a single amorous notion about this ball-breaker—much given to kittenish, come-hither comments along the lines of "Richard, I thought I asked you to tidy up?" and "Why the hell can't you do something that needs doing?"—is testament either to a libido of iron or to an erotic sensibility that leans toward the deeply masochistic. If best-selling novels succeed because they "tap into" something in the culture, surely this woman's helpless anger at the man who she thought was going to share her domestic burden accounts in part for the book's immense popularity.

Pearson told an interviewer, "Until they program men to notice you're out of toilet paper, a happy domestic life will always be up to women"—a sentiment almost unanimously held by the working mothers I know. What we've learned during this thirty-year grand experiment is that men can be cajoled

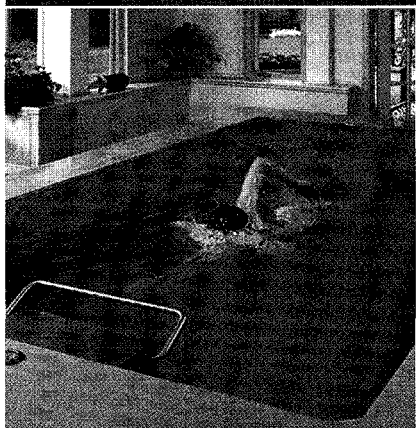


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into doing all sorts of household tasks, but they will not do them the way a woman would. They will bathe the children, but they will not straighten the bath mat and wring out the washcloths; they will drop a toddler off at nursery school, but they won't spend ten minutes chatting with the teacher and collecting the art projects. They will, in other words, do what men have always done: reduce a job to its simplest essentials and utterly ignore the fillips and niceties that women tend to regard as equally essential. And a lot of women feel cheated and angry and even—bless their hearts—surprised about this. In the old days, of course, men's inability to perform women's work competently was a source of satisfaction and pride to countless housewives. A reliable sitcom premise involved Father's staying home for a day while Mother handled

It turns out that the "traditional" marriage, which we've all been so happy to annihilate, had some pretty good provisions for many of today's most stubborn marital problems, such as how to combine work and parenthood, and how to keep the springs of the marriage bed in good working order. What's interesting about the sex advice given to married women of earlier generations is that it proceeds from the assumption that in a marriage a happy sex life depends upon orderly and successful housekeeping. Marabel Morgan's notorious 1973 book, *The Total Woman*, has lingered in people's minds because of the seduction techniques it recommends to unhappy housewives. They ought to consider meeting their husbands at the front door in sexy costumes (heels and lingerie, that kind of thing), calling them

What's interesting about the sex advice given to married women of earlier generations is that it proceeds from the assumption that in a marriage a happy sex life depends upon orderly and successful housekeeping.

things at his office; chastened and newly admiring of the other's abilities, each ran gratefully back to familiar terrain. Nowadays, when a working mother arrives home after a late deposition, only to find the living room strewn with Legos and a pizza box crammed into the kitchen trash, she tends to get madder than a wet hen. Women are left with two options: endlessly haranguing their husbands to be more womanly, or silently fuming and (however wittingly) launching a sex strike of an intensity and a duration that would have impressed Aristophanes. The men who caved to the pressure to become more feminine—putting little notes in the lunch boxes, sweeping up after snack time, the whole bit—may delight their wives but they probably don't improve their sex lives much, owing to the thorny old problem of *la difference*. I might be quietly thrilled if my husband decided to forgo his weekly tennis game so that he could alphabetize the spices and scrub the lazy Susan, but I would hardly consider it an erotic gesture.

at work and talking dirty to them, seducing them beneath the dining-room table. (Morgan does not, however, recommend that women nurture a burning intelligence. In a list of unconventional locations in which to make love, she includes the hammock, counseling her readers, "He may say 'We don't have a hammock.' You can reply 'Oh, darling, I forgot!'"). But long before she describes any of these memorable techniques, Morgan gives a quite thorough accounting of how a housewife ought to go about "redeeming the time" and the energy so that she is physically and emotionally able to make love on a regular basis. A housewife should run her household the way an executive runs his business: with goals, schedules, and plans. She should make dinner—or at least do all the shopping and planning for it—right after breakfast, so that she isn't running around like a madwoman in the late afternoon with no idea what to cook. She should take time to rest and relax during the day so that she is not exhausted and depleted come whoopee

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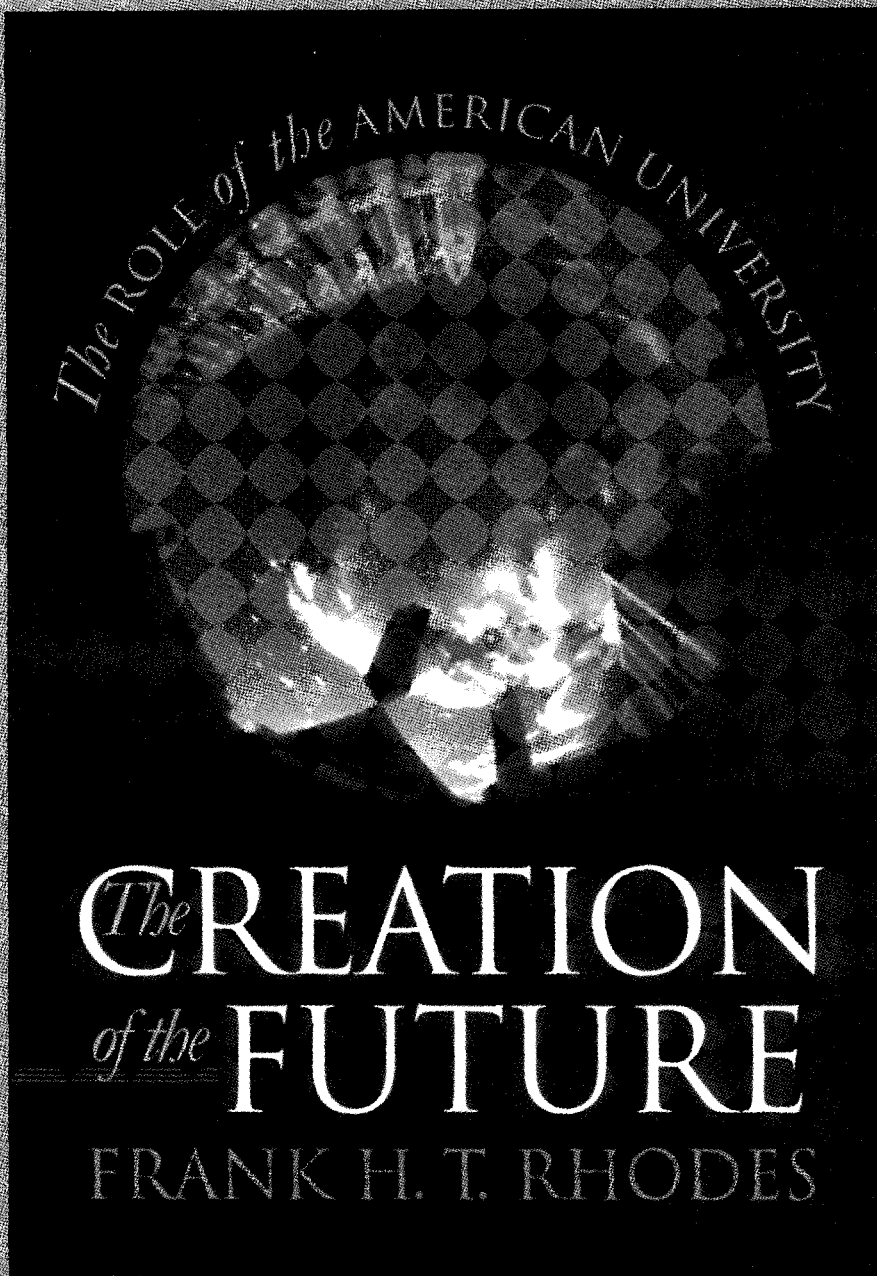
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hour. With the right kind of planning, "you can have all your home duties finished before noon." In a household run by an incompetent wife, however, "by the time her husband enters the scene, she's had it," Morgan writes. "She's too tired to be available to him." This seems a fairly accurate depiction of many contemporary two-career marriages, in which dinner is a nightly crisis (what to eat?) and an endless negotiation (who to cook it?) entered into by two people who have been managing crises and negotiating agreements all day long and who still have the children's homework and baths and bedtimes to contend with.

A document in circulation on the Internet purports to be a list contained in a 1950s home-economics book and announces that it is designed to offer future wives "preparation for married life." I recently attended a dinner party at which this list was read aloud by the hostess, to general hilarity, and I know of at least two classrooms (one at a prep school, the other at a graduate school) where it was read and received in similar sidesplitting fashion. The book advises the housewife to prepare for her husband's arrival at the end of the day: to have dinner ready, to minimize household noise and clutter, to avoid assaulting her man with a list of domestic problems and disappointments, and to inquire about his day. There was a sense back in those innocent years that a day at the office was a tiring event that required a bit of recuperation: a cold drink, a sympathetic companion, a decent meal—all of which, I suspect, functioned as a sexual tonic. The modern professional workday, as we all know, is far more demanding than its predecessors: it lasts much longer, and the various technologies that were supposed to liberate workers from the office have in fact made the whole world an office. (I recently sat on an otherwise deserted tropical beach, a few minutes after a spectacular sunrise, and watched a middle-aged American man march grimly through pellucid knee-high surf, barking commands on a cell phone.) When a professional person crosses the threshold at the end of the

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day, the commute hasn't provided a transition from work; it has been a continuation of it, thanks to the array of pagers, phones, and even Internet connections available to the modern driver. And—here's the kicker—there isn't just one spouse who has had such a punishing day, there are two of them. No one has spent even a moment planning a gentle re-entry into home life, let alone plotting a thrilling seduction.

Adding to a modern wife's reluctance to seduce the old man on a regular basis is the fact that her job outside the home has conferred on her a power that housewives simply didn't possess. In *The Total Woman* there's a quite frank acceptance of the fact that keeping a husband sexually happy is a direct route to a measure of economic power for the wife. A couple of days after Morgan's first night of giving her husband "super sex," he calls her to make sure that she will be home at three o'clock: "I couldn't imagine what was coming and I was stunned to see a truck pull up with a new refrigerator-freezer ... Now, without being nagged, he was beginning to give me what I yearned for." Later he lets her redecorate the family room. The women with whom Morgan shares the secrets of super sex (which, in case you are wondering, include not only making dinner early but also moaning a lot during sex and keeping your hands moving on your husband's body throughout intercourse) also get their share of perks. One delighted postcoital woman breathlessly reports to her classmates in a *Total Woman* workshop, "He has never brought me a gift before, but this past week he bought me two nighties, two rose bushes, and a can opener!" (Ah, would that Dr. Freud were still with us to contemplate that can opener.)

Although I have an amused tolerance for books like *The Total Woman*, I am not entirely incapable of good, old-fashioned feminist rage. The notion that even educated middle-class American women had to put out in order to get a damn refrigerator—even that they might "yearn" for one—just steams me. However, I would not advise against using sex for more subtle marital adjustments, of a type described in *The*

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Sex-Starved Marriage. Davis reminds women that one of the more effective ways to get a husband to be more considerate and helpful is to seduce him. She counsels a group of female clients who complain of angry, critical husbands to “pay more attention to their physical relationships with their husbands,” to “be sexier, more affectionate, attentive, responsive, and passionate.” Darned if the old bag of tricks doesn’t work like a charm—the ladies arrive at the next therapy session giggling and thrilled with their new powers. To many contemporary women, however, the notion that sex might have any function other than personal fulfillment (and the occasional bit of carefully scheduled baby making) is a violation of the very tenets of the sexual revolution that so deeply shaped their attitudes on such matters. Under these conditions, pity the poor married man hoping to get a bit of comfort from the wife at day’s end. He must somehow seduce a woman who is economically independent of him, bone tired, philosophically disinclined to have sex unless she is jolly well in the mood, numbingly familiar with his every sexual maneuver, and still doing a slow burn over his failure to wipe down the countertops and fold the dish towel after cooking the kids’ dinner. He can hardly be blamed for opting instead to check his e-mail, catch a few minutes of *SportsCenter*, and call it a night.

A final, less quantifiable development has served to snuff out marital sexuality, and it has to do with the way middle- and upper-middle-class adults think about family life and their role in it. There are many indications of this, but let us simply glance at the Disney catalogue. Not surprisingly, in addition to toys and figurines the catalogue features Disney-themed clothing: bathrobes with Winnie the Pooh appliqués, stretch knit pants with a small Mickey Mouse at the hem, quilted “Magic Winter Jackets” featuring a choice of Eeyore, Mickey, or Pooh. Here’s the problem: all these items are for adults. In fact, I was horrified to discover that it would have been possi-

ble for my husband and me to spend last Halloween trick-or-treating in matching Tweedledum and Tweedledee costumes—a pretty far cry from Marabel Morgan’s idea of a good costume.

For many couples child-rearing has become not merely one aspect of marriage but its entire purpose and function. Spouses regard each other not as principally lovers and companions but as sharers of the great, unending burden of taking care of the children. And make no mistake about it: American middle-class families have made child-rearing a dauntingly complex enterprise. My children are

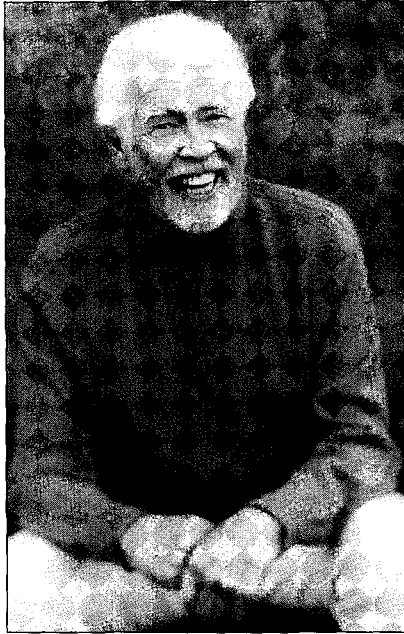


still very small, but it has been made abundantly clear to me by friends and acquaintances that I had better get in the market for an SUV or a minivan, because I am soon enough going to be shuttling the children and their friends to a bewildering series of soccer games, soccer parties, soccer tournaments. Already I throw birthday parties with guest lists and budgets that approximate those of a wedding-rehearsal dinner. The curious thing about this labor-intensive variety of parenting is that it has arisen now, when parents—and specifically mothers—have less time to devote to their children than ever before. One can’t help finding in these developments a frantic attempt at compensation for the hours some professional-class mothers spend away from their children. Mothering, which used to be a rather private affair (requiring, principally, a playpen, a back yard, a television set, and

a coffeepot), has now adopted a very public dimension. Why, of course Sarah So-and-So is a good mother: little Andrew is at Cymboree, Music Rhapsody, Bright Child, and Fit for Kids every week! All of domestic life now turns on the entertainment and happiness not of the adults but of the children. At vacation time my husband and I don’t drag our little boys through the Louvre, as I was dragged at a tender age (because my parents wanted to see it, and it would never have occurred to them to consult their children about where to go on holiday). Rather, we check into hotels with elaborate children’s pools and nightly fireworks and huge duck ponds. It’s all very jolly, but it is entirely possible, I suppose, that some parents will overidentify with the whole thing, will forget that they are in fact the adults and not the children. And if your conception of yourself is as a great big eight-year-old, you’re not very likely to have sex on your mind come the end of the day.

When I was a teenager, in the 1970s, I was always quite happy to accept a baby-sitting job, because I knew that once I got the kids to sleep, I could read *The Joy of Sex* for an hour or two; I don’t think I baby-sat for a single family that didn’t have a copy. There was a sense that young parents of that generation—granted, I grew up in Berkeley, which may have skewed the sample considerably—were still getting it on. Similarly, the characters one encounters in Cheever and Updike, with their cocktails and cigarettes and affairs, seem at once infinitely more dissolute and more adult than most of the young parents I know. Nowadays, American parents of a certain social class seem squeaky clean, high-achieving, flush with cash, relatively exhausted, obsessed with their children, and somehow—how to pinpoint this?—undersexed.

If *I Don’t Know How She Does It*, a book about a working woman who discovers deep joy and great sex by quitting her job and devoting herself to family life, had been written by a man, he would be the target of a lynch mob the proportions and fury of which would

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by Ronald M. Lawrence, M.D.

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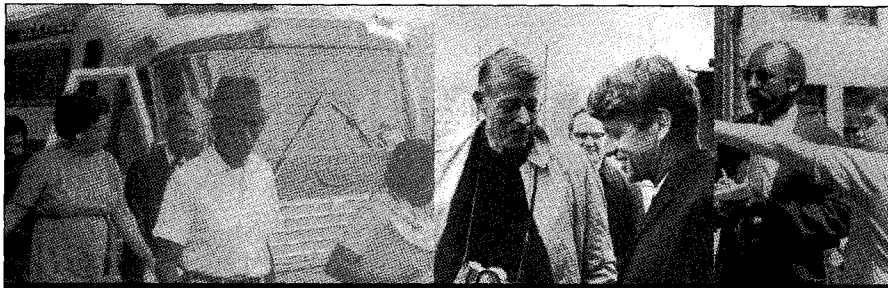
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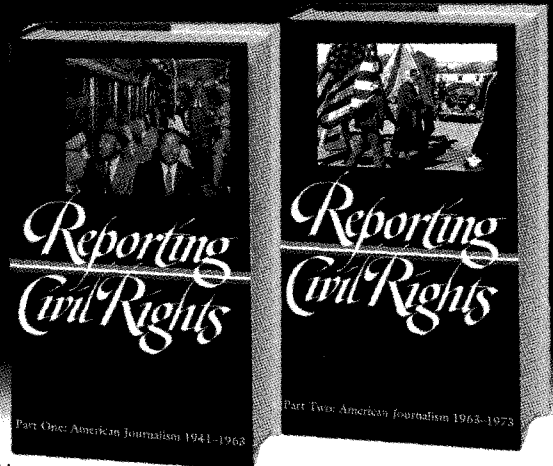
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make Salman Rushdie feel like a lucky, lucky man. But of course it was written by a with-it female journalist, so it's safe, even admired. Allison Pearson, we have been given to understand, is telling it like it is. And what she's telling us, essentially, is that in several crucial aspects the women's movement has been a bust, even for the social class that most ardently championed it.

Given the curious alchemy of feminism, which transforms absolutely anything women choose to do into a crucial element of liberation doctrine, confessing that one has given up sex has become a very right-on and empowering act. A hot new collection of essays (all of them interesting and one of them—by Ellen Gilchrist—exquisite) titled *The Bitch in the House* is filled with such gleefully tendered admissions, including that of the writer Jill Bialosky, whose account of a long lunch with an old friend is featured on the book's jacket: "My friend asked me about my marriage. 'Are you guys having sex?' she asked bluntly ... I wanted to laugh." What's interesting about these public confessions—and, I suspect, what makes them so satisfying to women—is that they are utterly humiliating to husbands. Granted, Bialosky has protected her husband's privacy by referring to him as "D." throughout the essay—but perhaps, if her heart had really been in it, she would have written under a pseudonym. Clearly, sticking it to D. was part of her intention when she wrote and published the piece. Every account I've ever read in which a married woman admits she's not having sex anymore begins with a red-hot account of the sex she used to have with her husband before they had children. Before Jill Bialosky decided to cut off poor D., he was having the time of his life.

He pressed up against me in dark alleys. I gave him blow jobs as he drove on one of our weekend treks. We made out in taxicabs. There was a kind of volatile tension wired through our relationship that set my body on fire feeling his arm resting against mine in the dark cavern of a movie theater.

But now? "A little faucet had turned off inside my body. My veins were cold. I didn't want to be touched." And here—

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with that little faucet—is the heart of the matter. The Jill Bialoskys of the world may feel that they belong to the most outrageously liberated group of women yet to stride the earth. These women assume that in the very act of confession they are wearing the mantle of freedom. They are not only free enough to perform oral sex in a moving car—a bit of cutting-edge eroticism that, I believe, dates back to the Model T—but also free enough to admit, in tones of outrage and bewilderment, to the abrupt waning of their desire. What they don't understand, and what women of an earlier era might have been able to tell them, is that when the little faucet turns off, it is time not to rat out your husband (is there anything more wounding to a man, and therefore more cruel and vicious, than a wife's public admission that he is not satisfying her in bed?) but rather to *turn it back on*. It is not complicated; it requires putting the children to bed at a decent hour and adopting a good attitude. The rare and enviable woman is not the one liberated enough to tell hurtful secrets about her marriage to her girlfriends or the reading public. Nor is she the one capable of attracting the sexual attentions of a variety of worthy suitors. The rare woman—the good wife, and the happy one—is the woman who maintains her husband's sexual interest and who returns it in full measure.

Sex therapists concur that sexless marriages are not inherently problematic; if both partners are satisfied with a passionless union, the marriage is said to be in fine shape. But I'm not so sure. Marriage remains the most efficient engine of disenchantment yet invented. There is nothing like uninterrupted cohabitation and grinding responsibility to cast a clear, unforgiving light on the object of desire. Once children come along, it's easy for parents to regard each other as co-presidents of an industrious little corporation. Certainly, all sound marriages benefit from sudden and unexpected infusions of good will—*What luck! Here we are, so many years later and still as happy as ever!* But the element that regularly restores a marriage to something with an aspect of romance rather than of collegiality is sex. ▀

Caitlin Flanagan is a contributing editor of *The Atlantic*.

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THE WARTIME TOLL ON GERMANY

W. G. Sebald wrote of the pain of belonging to a nation that, in Thomas Mann's words, "cannot show its face"

BY CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

.....

The narrator of Thomas Mann's *Doctor Faustus* (1947) is relating his story against the clock, as the German homeland finds itself pulverized and encircled in the spring of 1945. He punctuates almost every chapter with contemporary tidings of apocalypse.

This earth-shaking, plummeting havoc has come breathtakingly close to my refuge several times now. The dreadful bombardment of the city of Dürer and Willibald Pirckheimer was no longer some distant event; and as the Last Judgment fell upon Munich as well, I sat here in my study, turning ashen, shaking like the walls, doors, and windowpanes of my house.

A little later comes Leipzig's turn.

Its famous publishing district is, I sadly hear, only a heap of rubble and an immeasurable wealth of literary and educational material is now the spoil of destruction—a heavy loss not only for us Germans, but also for a whole world that cares about culture. That world, however, is apparently willing—whether blindly or correctly, I dare not decide—to take the loss into the bargain.

Almost a hundred pages later comes a thought to balance the preceding one.

Granted, the destruction of our cities from the air has long since turned Germany into an arena of war; and yet we find it inconceivable, impermissible, to think that Germany could ever become such an arena in the true sense, and our propaganda has a curious way of warning the foe against incursion upon our soil, our sacred German soil, as if that would be some grisly atrocity ... Our sacred German soil! As if anything were still sacred about it, as if it had not long ago been desecrated again and again by the immensity of our rape of justice and did not lie naked, both morally and in fact, before the power of divine judgment. Let it come!

Reeling nonetheless from the scarcely bearable consequences of his own wish, he trembles for his home town once more.

Awaiting our fate, beyond whose calamity no man can surmise, I have withdrawn into my hermit's cell in Freising and avoid the sight of our hideously battered Munich—the toppled statues, the façades that gaze from vacant eye sockets to disguise the yawning void behind, and yet seem inclined to reveal it, too, by supplying more of the rubble already strewn over the cobblestones.

By the opening of the penultimate chapter Mann has synthesized the two themes—first the crashing chords of *Götterdämmerung*, and second the awareness of nemesis.

There is no stopping it: surrender on all sides, everyone scattering. Our shattered and devastated cities fall like ripe plums. Darmstadt, Würzburg, Frankfurt have succumbed. Mannheim and Kassel, even Münster, Leipzig—they all obey strangers now ... Among the regime's great men, who wallowed in power, riches, and injustice, suicide rages, passing its sentence

... *Whatever lived as German stands now as an abomination and the epitome of evil.* What will it be like to belong to a nation whose history bore this gruesome

fiasco within it, a nation that has driven itself mad, gone psychologically bankrupt, that admittedly despairs of governing itself and thinks it best that it become a colony of foreign powers, a nation that will have to live in isolated confinement, like the Jews of the ghetto, because the dreadfully swollen hatred all around it will not permit it to step outside its borders—a nation that cannot show its face? [italics added]

The slightly glib analogy to Jewish ghetto life might have been forgiven by Victor Klemperer, who had been wearing a yellow star since the early 1940s in the doomed city of Dresden, and who had been gradually and humiliatingly stripped of his right to teach, to publish, to travel, to own a car, to own a cat, and to receive standard rations. On

January 15, 1945, awaiting with dread the last roundup of Jews like himself, who had "Aryan" spouses, he heard of an anti-Nazi broadcast made by Thomas Mann from America. The fellow sufferer who described the broadcast, as they cowered together in a cellar, told Klemperer, "[It was] splendid—it gave my spirits such a lift!" Klemperer himself was more skeptical, admiring Mann as he always had, but suspecting him of having taken sides only when the outcome was clear. He also took some dry pleasure in informing his interlocutor that Mann was not a Jew, even though he was wed to one.

How to describe the experience of reading Klemperer's two-volume diary *I Will Bear Witness* (1998 and 1999) and, so to speak, knowing what is going to happen before he does? He registered every premonition, both of the aerial destruction of Germany and of the simultaneous extirpation of the Jews, an extirpation that became more frenzied and more cold-blooded as the Hitler regime imploded. Klemperer clearly desired that the latter calamity might be forestalled—but without the necessity for the former. In a reckoning so ironic and fateful that even Faustus himself

might have gasped at it, he and his wife were saved by the immolation of Dresden, on February 13 and 14, 1945, beginning just a few

hours after they had been informed that all remaining Jewish spouses must report for deportation, which they both understood to be the end. The now overworked word "holocaust" means literally "destruction by fire": the old Klemperer couple escaped holocaust in one sense by passing through it in another. On the smoldering morrow they took advantage of the utter havoc, removed Victor's yellow star, and set off on foot toward survival and, ultimately, liberation.

Klemperer's journals have in common with Mann's writing an extraordinary and admirable quality: the blunt refusal to concede a particle of German pride to the gangrenous rabble of the Nazi Party. This is why both writers lend such emphasis to the magnificence of German civilization, whether expressed

ON THE NATURAL
HISTORY OF
DESTRUCTION
by W. G. Sebald
Random House



Berlin, 1945

in architecture or painting or philosophy, and it is also why neither does so uncritically. Mann argued with himself in California, in what must have been exceedingly dark nights of the soul, by balancing his horror of a German defeat against his loathing for a German victory. Klemperer, for all his liberalism and all his rooted distrust for the similarity between Nazi slogans and Communist ones, eventually opted for East Germany as the inheritor of the “better” tradition. For those of us who never had to face such appalling choices, the question to be resolved at a distance and after a lengthy pause is, Can the survival of the Klemperers, weighed on a scale of ultimate judgment, balance or cancel the

mass killing in Dresden? This is, without its being defined quite so strenuously, the question confronted by the author of *On the Natural History of Destruction*.

W. G. Sebald, whose premature death, in December of 2001, is still being mourned by all who love writing for its own sake, was quite willing to face the quasi-biblical implications that are involved here. And he could not avoid references to Teutonic antiquity and the ghastly, sanguinary struggles with Roman imperialism. Here is Sebald in *On the Natural History of Destruction*:

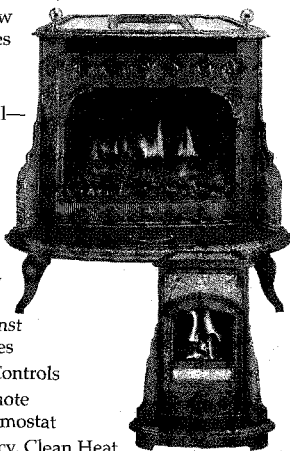
And while [Fritz] Lang, in Babelsberg, turned Thea von Harbou’s visions

into images capable of reproduction for German cinema audiences, a decade before Hitler seized power the logisticians of the Wehrmacht were already working on their own Cheruscan fantasy, a truly terrifying script which provided for the annihilation of the French army on German soil, the devastation of whole areas of the country, and high losses among the civilian population. Even the originator and chief advocate of strategic extremism, General von Stülpnagel, could probably not have envisaged the ultimate outcome of this new battle of the Teutoburger Wald, which left great expanses of the German cities in ruins. Later, our vague feelings of shared guilt prevented anyone, including the writers whose task it was to keep the nation’s collective memory alive, from being permitted to remind us of such humiliating images as the incident in the Altmarkt in Dresden, where 6,865 corpses were burned on pyres in February 1945 by an SS detachment which had gained its experience at Treblinka.

But even as Sebald underlines a very direct moral connection between the charnel house of Dresden and the revolting crimes of Nazism, he appears to be making his own subtle challenge to the official and unofficial “script.” What is meant, for example, by “vague feelings of shared guilt”? Postwar Germans were approximately divided between those who indignantly disowned “guilt”—which ought surely to be placed on the active rather than the passive citizenry—and those who steadily accepted “responsibility.” The crucial word here may be the rather weak and compromising “shared.” Willy Brandt, who had worn the uniform of another army in combating Hitler (and who was never forgiven for it by the German right), proposed that although not all Germans could or should be held to collective guilt, there was nonetheless a general or collective responsibility. In stating this he was both brave and generous. But then look at Sebald’s other weak qualifier. I certainly can’t picture Herr Brandt describing this emotion or conviction as “vague.” *Vague*? Remember what we are talking about. And Sebald isn’t at all vague when he assigns to “writers” the “task” of keeping “the nation’s collective memory alive.” Suppose we agree that writers have national “tasks” in the first place, and that we

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further concede that a battle against amnesia forms a portion of such a task. Vagueness on certain points would then become an enemy to be contested with some vigor.

Quite by accident, the rather prosaic Chancellor Helmut Kohl came up with a sonorous phrase during the 1980s. Weathering one of the many periodic tempests that bring the terrible past to life in his country (it may well have been after his clumsy suggestion that Ronald Reagan lay a wreath at a cemetery where SS members had been interred [*"Ich bin ein Bitburger"*]), he ingenuously referred to himself as protected by "the grace of late birth." The element of luck, it might be said, was more conspicuous than that of grace. But everybody knew what Kohl meant. As if to demonstrate the burden of history and the uneven distribution of its weight, a huge success has recently attended Antony Beevor's heart-freezing account (*The Fall of Berlin 1945*) of the rape and murder and humiliation that fell on Germans in the territory taken by the Soviet army in 1945. The book's publication in Germany provoked an uprush of repressed memory and shame that filled pages of newsprint: one of the girls battered and defiled by Stalin's soldiers had been, it turned out, Hannelore Kohl, the late wife of the ex-Chancellor. In common with a rather large number of German women and girls, she had evidently realized in the postwar period that nobody was likely to be very much moved by her story.

Not only was W. G. Sebald protected by "the grace of late birth"—he was born in 1944—but he chose to spend the greater part of his life in England. Indeed, he spent thirty years at the University of East Anglia, in the city of Norwich. The flatness of the East Anglian landscape, and its proximity to the North Sea, made it an ideal launching ground for the Royal Air Force during the war, as it does for the USAF today. As Sebald phrases it,

Many of the more than seventy airfields from which the war of annihilation was waged against Germany were in the county of Norfolk. Some

ten of them are still military bases, and a few others are now used by flying clubs, but most were abandoned after the war. Grass has grown over the runways, and the dilapidated control towers, bunkers, and corrugated iron huts stand in an often eerie landscape where you sense the dead souls of the men who never came back from their missions, and of those who perished in the vast fires. I live very close to Seething airfield. I sometimes walk my dog there, and imagine what the place was like when the aircraft took off with their heavy freight and flew out over the sea, making for Germany. Two years before these flights began, a Luftwaffe Dornier plane crashed in a field not far from my house during a raid on Norwich. One of the four crew members who lost their lives, Lieutenant Bollert, shared a birthday with me and was the same age as my father.

So much for the few points at which my own life touches the history of the air war. Entirely insignificant in themselves, they have none the less haunted my mind, and finally impelled me to go at least a little way into the question of why German writers would not or could not describe the destruction of the German cities as millions experienced it.

I feel a tug of empathy when I read this melancholy account, complete with its Dickensian place-name of "Seething." I was born only five years after Sebald, and was brought up on and around British naval and air bases, and spent much time playing on disused airfields. The cities of my boyhood—most notably Portsmouth and Plymouth, but also Valletta, in Malta—still exhibited enormous scars from the Nazi blitzkrieg. Yet for me and for my cohort, all of this was a cause for pride, and excitement, and made us ready to listen to our fathers as they—with sometimes feigned reluctance—unfolded their war stories. What must it be like to have this in one's immediate past, yet with no cause for affirmation, let alone celebration? And why should my German contemporaries feel inhibited about discussing the erasure of great cities and churches and monuments in their country, to say nothing of the killing of numberless civilians? There are many British people who feel that needless harm was done, and cruelty inflicted; and the unveiling in London a decade ago of a statue to Air

Chief Marshal Arthur "Bomber" Harris, the architect of the air campaign against Germany, was attended by some forceful protests in print and on the streets.

Looking over Sebald's evocative paragraphs, though, I find that I pause immediately at the terse way in which he says "war of annihilation." I also wince a bit at the way he mourns the Luftwaffe crew slightly more than he regrets the "raid" on Norwich. I don't do this, I trust, for any insular or tribal reason. In a letter left for his sons, the late Heinrich Böll told them that they would always be able to tell everything about another German by noticing whether this fellow citizen, in conversation, described April 1945 as "the defeat" or as "the liberation." Thomas Mann and Victor Klemperer were quite decided on this point, and they really did write about—and in the latter case endure—the very calamity that Sebald says is somehow unmentionable. (Böll's novel *The Silent Angel*, a book that unflinchingly discusses the ruins and the corpses, was written at the end of the 1940s but, as Sebald points out, not published until 1992.) Still, if one takes as one's standard the work and thought of the German oppositionists and dissidents, one is employing a measure that does nothing but credit to German culture and tradition.

More recently another book, which seemingly seeks to reopen the same question in a different way, has been published in Germany. *Der Brand (The Fire)*, by the historian Jörg Friedrich, accuses Winston Churchill of a conscious policy of airborne terrorism against civilians. The right-wing mass-circulation tabloid *Das Bild* has called Churchill a war criminal in its editorial pages and, in serializing Friedrich's work, has demanded recognition of German suffering. The word "brand" in English, of course, carries a distinctly different vernacular meaning.

At times Sebald seems to want to have this both ways. He invites us to read the letters he received from German readers after he first broached this subject, in a series of public lectures in Zurich in 1997, and thus we discover that a certain combination of arrogance and self-pity, of the kind Christopher

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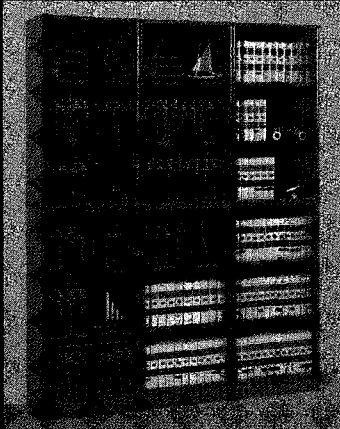


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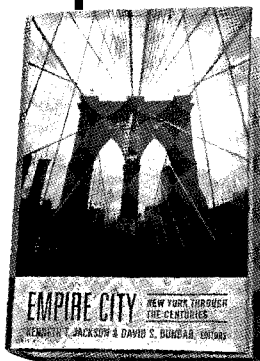
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Isherwood noticed in his landlady in *Goodbye to Berlin*, is still around, and still tinged with anti-Semitism. Sebald stipulates what otherwise I would find myself pedantically pointing out: that the Nazi regime had its own plans for the destruction of other people's cities. (Even in 1945, when all was lost, the wretches amid the rubble of Germany were officially cheered up by the news that the Führer's ultimate "wonder-weapons"—the guided V1 and V2 missiles—were falling on London.) Indeed, it is possible to imagine that if anti-Jewish paranoia had not deprived the Third Reich of so many gifted physicists, the unthinkable might have occurred. Thus most people outside Germany itself still tend to shrug at the horror, if they agree to discuss it at all, as if to say, Well, what goes around comes around. And those non-Germans who have drawn attention to the promiscuously inflicted devastation are suspected of a covert sympathy for the other side.

This doesn't relieve the rest of us of some responsibility. After all, the firebombing of Dresden was so appallingly total that it might just as easily have killed Victor Klemperer (who was injured in the eye and for a while separated from his wife by the chaos) as rescued him. Few historians or strategists now argue that the bombing made much if any difference to the outcome of the war, and it may have been conducted partly to reassure Joseph Stalin, who always feared that the British and the Americans might conclude a separate peace. The opening of official papers long ago permitted us to read Lord Cherwell's advice to Churchill that bombs should be concentrated on working-class housing, to maximize casualties; and one objects not just to the studied deliberation of this but also to the fact that these districts were the heart of anti-Nazi resistance in anti-Nazi cities like Hamburg. (So *that* was where all the "good Germans" went—into the firestorms of the RAF.)

Then one has to face the fact that Henry Morgenthau nearly achieved the adoption of his plan, which was to consummate the violent, dramatic depopulation of Germany and a subsequent



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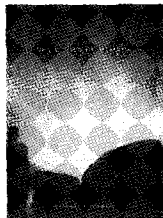
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reduction of its survivors to a servile or peasant status. The Churchill-Roosevelt papers tell the story of how, at the Quebec and Hyde Park conferences of 1944, Churchill accepted this idea (preferring to call it a "pastoral" solution to the German problem) after having initially described it as "unnatural, unChristian and unnecessary." He and Roosevelt then turned their attention to the deployment of nuclear weaponry, first directly against Japan and then—at least in Churchill's mind—as a means of impressing the Soviet Union. Thanks to Cordell Hull and Henry Stimson, the Morgenthau plan was not adopted in the postwar American and British zones, though the USSR did denude eastern Germany of much of its productive industrial capacity. And it might now be admitted that the Cold War's half acceptance of "two Germanys"—a policy that left a new generation of East Germans to grow up without any experience of democracy—was paradoxically conditioned by the same feeling of "woe to the conquered." (Interesting that we still employ the German word *schadenfreude* when speaking of a cruel sense of satisfaction, as if nationalizing an emotion that is common to all.) However, it can be pointed out without too much defensiveness that American and British soldiers did not, upon their arrival in Germany, commit atrocities against civilians on the ground. This is much more than can be said for the legions of either Hitler or Stalin, and it must qualify any suggestion that the war against Nazism was allowed to become a war of "annihilation."

It is probably the creditably peaceful and democratic reunification of Germany that has impelled—or perhaps permitted—Sebald and other writers to revisit the half-buried past. Even Günter Grass, who opposed what he absurdly called the 1989 "Anschluss" with the eastern *lander*, and who could never utter a public word on local politics without emphasizing Auschwitz, has now published a novel (*Crab Walk*) about the suffering of German refugees in the closing moments of the war. I have already mentioned the terrible atrocities committed by the Red Army; the mass expulsion, dispossession, and

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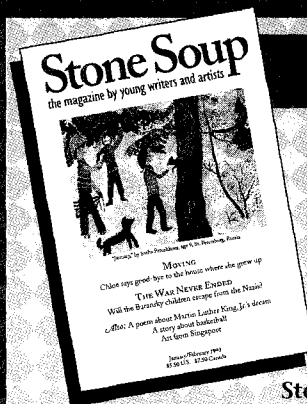
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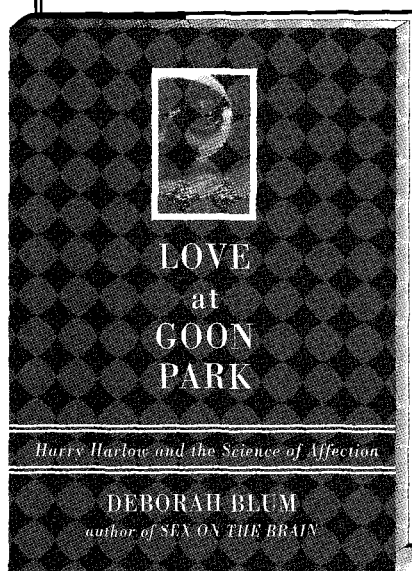
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killing of German-speaking minorities in the Czech lands and Hungary after 1945 has also recently become an issue that respectable people may mention without incurring suspicion. Sebald approaches this thicket very deftly, making good use of his long residence in England. He describes how in the 1980s he went to see Solly Zuckerman, who had been one of Churchill's circle of military-intellectual advisers on "area bombing." After the war Zuckerman had hastened to Cologne, to indulge his professional interest by viewing the results. He found that he was unable to summon any adequate words for what he saw. ("All that remained in his mind was the image of the blackened cathedral rising from the stony desert around it, and the memory of a severed finger that he had found on a heap of rubble.") It had been his intention, Zuckerman told Sebald, to compose an essay for Cyril Connolly's magazine *Horizon*. But he was unable to produce it. The working title of the never written article was "On the Natural History of Destruction" ...

In *Doctor Faustus*, Mann stated the problem that Sebald confronts. "It is not far from capitulation to pure abdication and the offer to let the victor go right ahead and govern the affairs of the fallen nation just as he pleases, since for its part that nation no longer knows up from down." Hans Magnus Enzensberger, the most astute and mordant of the German critics, phrased it more dialectically when he argued that this very docility was a source of strength. "The mysterious energy of the Germans" could not be understood, he wrote, "if we refuse to realize that they have made a virtue of their deficiencies. Insensibility was the condition of their success." The British liked to put this in an unworthily scornful tone. The Germans, one used to hear it said in my father's circles, are either at your throat or at your feet ... But Sebald's well-chosen excerpts from Janet Flanner's reportage, and from the Swedish writer Stig Dagerman, suggest a missing element of German stoicism. Dagerman noticed that he could easily be identified as a foreigner on a train passing through the leveled city of Hamburg, because he was the only one staring out the window.

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Jack Hannah in *You Will Not Taste Death: Jesus and Epicureanism* recognizes the notes as chronologically ordered and correlative with the skeletal history used in the *Gospel of Mark*. Hannah provides all the text of *Thomas* and all Marcan context, and upon this develops a narrative about Jesus that is tenably historical.

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With a part of themselves, thinking Germans obviously understood that their late Führer not only brought this devastation on them but actually wished it on them. He had preferred an immolated nation to a surrendered one. So the surrender was, in an admittedly less than glorious way, a double defeat for the madman. Even though no Western reporter worth his salt has since neglected any story, however trivial, that suggests a stirring of neo-Nazism, no German constituency worth its salt has ever shown any real interest in endorsing such a thing. In European discussions the most punctilious internationalists are the Germans, whose government even surrendered the special symbol of its deutschmark to the idea of a Europeanized Germany. The large majority of refugees from the recent Balkan wars found hospitality on German soil. Nobody except the left-Green Joschka Fischer has really ever been able to commit or persuade Germans to send their troops overseas. Even the provincial-minded campaign run by Gerhard Schröder a few months ago illustrated this same point, in a different if less noble way.

In the past few years I have spent time with courageous Serbian dissidents, including veteran partisans for wartime Yugoslavia, who came to the point at which they welcomed and supported the NATO bombing of Belgrade and the military defeat of Milosevic's "willing executioners." These days I have been talking to a number of Iraqi exiles and oppositionists who, with infinite pain but impressive honesty, have taken a similar position. These patriots do not want their country to humiliate or murder others, and neither do they wish their country to be humiliated or destroyed. (One has not just to hope but to demand that our war planners bear this in mind.) Germany suffered both those disgraces to the fullest possible extent, and Sebald registers that contradiction to the limit of his ability. His opening bid deserves criticism, as I hope I have shown. But how depressing it is to reflect that he did not live to take part in the discussion that his book ought still to inaugurate. ▀

Christopher Hitchens is a columnist for Vanity Fair. His most recent book, Why Orwell Matters, was published in November.



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GOING TO EXTREMES

Richard Powers is getting bigger and more ponderous. Nicholson Baker is getting smaller and more evanescent. Decision: Baker

BY THOMAS MALLON

.....

Richard Powers and Nicholson Baker—exact contemporaries (b. 1957), each with an aura of eccentric genius—can be seen by now as the long and the short, the portentous yin and the whimsical yang, of American literary fiction. Every new Powers volume tends to put on weight and weightiness (more pages, more pronouncement), while Baker's books remain so tiny in scale and theme that they threaten to disappear altogether. Both men have just published novels, and there's a certain giddiness to be experienced from reading the two books together, whipsawed far from any golden mean.

Powers is a creature of internal dichotomies, too. His novels often contain double, alternating narratives: the two young researcher lovers tracing the two older geneticist lovers in *The Gold Bug Variations* (1991); the corporation's history juxtaposed against the product-liability plaintiff's in *Gain* (1998); the Seattle techies' building of a virtual-reality room while the Beirut hostage survives within four bare walls in *Plowing the Dark* (2000). The contrasts are sometimes illuminating, but the schematics can be so deliberate that form becomes function, or just collapses from its own exertions. *Plowing the Dark* fades out into nothing; both plots give up on themselves, and the novel ends with two dying falls.

At least since *The Gold Bug Variations*, Powers has been trying, in his own words, "to get those two inimicals, the head and the heart, going at the same time." He accomplished that beautifully in *Galatea 2.2* (1995), the story of a computer so zealously programmed with imaginative literature that it develops emotions and suffers a broken heart. Since *Galatea*, Powers has been celebrating more than he's been feeling, but with his latest book, as if in wild

overcompensation, he has led with his heart and entirely lost his head.

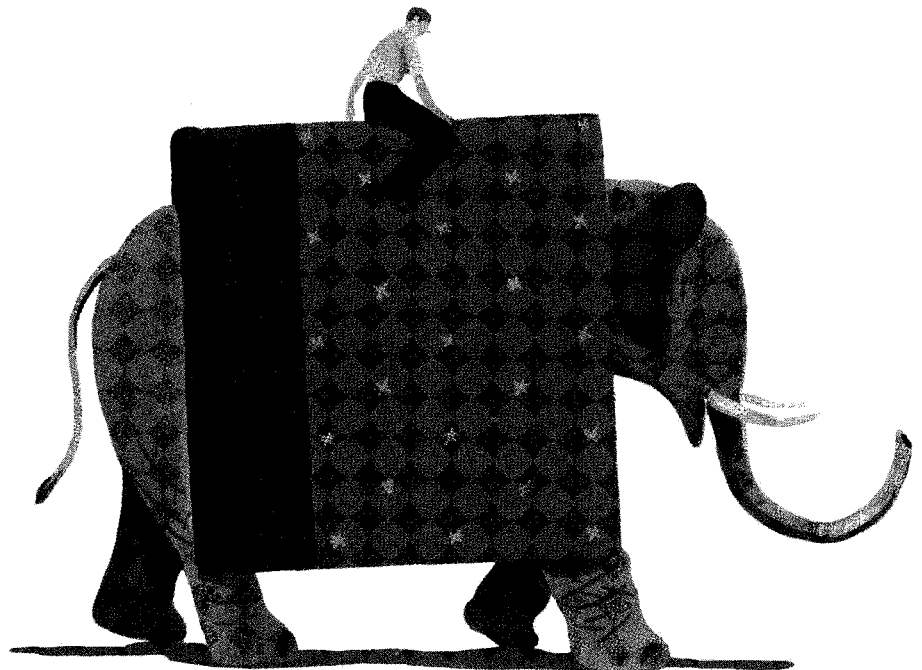
In *The Time of Our Singing*, Powers constructs a huge chronicle of the Strom family: David, a Jewish-refugee physicist from Hitler's Germany; Delia, the vocally talented daughter of an African-American doctor from Philadelphia; and their three interracial offspring, Jonah, Joseph, and Ruth. The parents meet at Marian Anderson's outdoor recital in Washington, in the spring of 1939—an event described with such stiff lyricism that the pages seem like a museum diorama.

THE TIME OF OUR SINGING
by Richard Powers
Farrar, Straus & Giroux

A BOX OF MATCHES
by Nicholson Baker
Random House

as if they're coming from some miscegenated version of the Glass family. On the advice of David's fellow physicist Albert Einstein, Jonah and Joseph are sent to Boylston Academy, in Boston. There, and later at Juilliard, despite others' bigotry and incomprehension, Jonah develops into a gifted concert singer of classical music, and Joseph into his more modestly talented accompanist.

Alas, what Jonah and Joseph really develop into is a boxed set of lamentations, the soundtrack for an entirely predictable indictment of race hatred in America. In addition to any successes they have, they must also be slighted, roughed up, thwarted, disowned, loved insincerely, and exiled. This is their *real* experience; any happiness is too transitory and inauthentic to rate much focus. Forgetting his observation in *The Gold Bug Variations* about character creation ("I looked for a postulate, completely missing the empiricist's point"), Powers plays his people like thematic violins. He is unable to maintain any real tonal



David and Delia become estranged from her father, Dr. Daley, when they try to raise their children "beyond race," inside their own tight, musical family. "Singing," Powers writes, "they were no one's outcasts." Powers has always favored archly precocious dialogue, and the Stroms' gnomic exchanges sound

difference between Joseph, who does most of the narration, and a disembodied third person that takes over whenever the story cuts back to its earliest events. Both voices are offered as fundamentally reliable. Joseph's anguished perspectives—he is by turns obedient, self-loathing, quietly resentful, and grandiosely guilty—

ILLUSTRATIONS BY JASON SCHNEIDER

ought to be indications of his limitations and individuality. But everything he says carries Powers's clear endorsement; he is the messenger of whatever obvious point there is to be made. "Violence accompanied us, nightly, on our hotel televisions," he says. "I stared at the collective hallucination, knowing I was somehow the author of it." He might as well be the author, period. We never believe in him because Powers doesn't either. He's a public-service announcement, not a person.

Jonah, with his panic spells and comic bravado, is the more interesting and attractive of the brothers, but that just makes him the riper for victimization, choice material for "the disaster this country had made of everything human." His sister, Ruth, who in the late 1960s joins the Black Panthers, forsakes her father in a symbolic enactment of the broken alliance between African-Americans and American Jews. Her anger is so shrill and unyielding that Powers himself seems afraid of her, and happy for us to believe her theory that Delia's death, in a mid-1950s furnace explosion at the family's Upper West Side apartment, was no accident. The literal truth doesn't matter against the supposedly larger one. As Jonah says to Joseph, in a burst of Sharptonian civics,

You don't need to know if someone burned her alive. All you need to know is whether someone wanted to ... You don't know, you can't know, and you're never *going* to know. That's what being black in this country means.

Historical novels usually work best when their characters are participants in a single big public event; they're unlikely to work at all when those characters are prodded along from one historical high spot to another. In *The Time of Our Singing* the Stroms become tokens on a game board: the novelist moves them three spaces ahead to the Watts riot (Jonah is making his first record in L.A. in 1965); two more to the 1968 Columbia disturbances (David Strom, on the physics faculty, is available to be clubbed by the cops); and another four toward Giuliani time: Ruth's Panther husband, Robert Rider, like Amadou Diallo, is shot by the police while extracting a

wallet, not a gun, from his pocket. Early on, in depicting the real-life murder of fourteen-year-old Emmett Till, in 1955, Powers deliberately withholds the boy's name for a few pages, wanting the reader to mistake the atrocity for something that's happening to Jonah, also fourteen, who we know has just developed a crush on a white girl. Parallels and resonance become a game of gotcha.

The author plods on like some harried social-studies teacher trying to get it all covered before the Regents exam. Germany invades Poland during David Strom's guess-who's-coming-to-dinner evening at the Daleys; in 1939; *Sputnik* flies overhead with the punctuality of a swallow on its way to Capistrano. Occasionally, to keep fact and fiction perfectly aligned, Powers resorts to making lists.

Che Guevara and George Lincoln Rockwell both died violent deaths. Jonah and I lived our days between flower children and nurse slayers, decolonization and defoliants, Twiggy and Tiny Tim, *Hair* and *The Naked Ape*.

But maybe such telling is better than some of what we are shown: An "avant-garde" fifties musical group calling themselves the Serial Killers? Young factory women fantasizing, in 1969, about Prince Rainier?

Powers's politics have been respectably leftist for many years (the anti-corporatism of *Gain*, the anti-globalization of *Plowing the Dark*), but the view of America in *The Time of Our Singing* never rises above the puerile and sloganeering. All the novel's blinkered repetitions and canards about "this caste-crazed country" turn the American dilemma into something not tragic, or soluble, but dull. Violence is "the country's supreme art form"; all progress in matters of race is either nonexistent or insincere. Here is the setup for the Tuskegee airmen: "Nazi transcendence—the last flare-up of white culture's world order—forces the country into a general housecleaning." Subsequent integration of the armed forces goes unmentioned. Readers will be interested to learn that in 1967 "people were constantly getting arrested for making speeches, holding rallies, printing pamphlets," and will be left curious to see an actual list of

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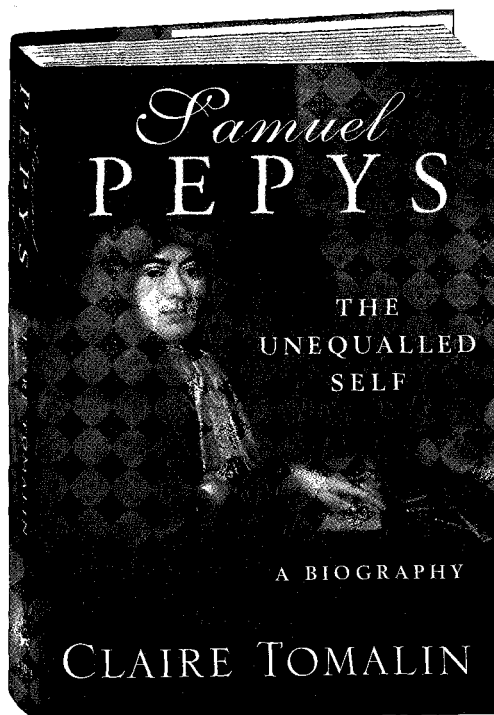
*Brad Zellar, *Minneapolis Star-Tribune*

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—MICHIKO KAKUTANI,
The New York Times

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"the Hanoi neighborhoods Johnson had been targeting" that year.

Powers usually bursts with such virtuosity that he can't stop piling simile upon simile, turning every paragraph into a long program of triple axels and double salchows. In *Plowing the Dark* he writes, "*Ste-ven Spie-gel*. The four syllables spread out over so long an astonishment that they lost themselves, like the word 'Asia' on a good-sized globe." This is a small piece of perfection, even if the description ends up being more important than the described. There's still a bit of such pleasurable excess in *The Time of Our Singing* ("His rounded forehead crested a little, in the planning stage of balding's evacuation"), but in this new novel Theme so harshly tells Writing to shove over that practiced readers of Powers, asked to do a blind test of any ten pages, would guess two dozen other names before hazarding "Richard Powers" as the possible author.

This time out he showcases not only reams of rhetoric (though twice we're reminded that it's harder to sing softly than loudly) but also a kind of automatic junk writing: "For some months, our life had looked increasingly unreal. Now I lost all sense of what *real* was supposed to look like." The book makes room, often, for the meaningless multiplication of profundity by sentimentality.

When is the zero of change, the spot in time when time begins? Not the big bang, or even the little one. Not when you learn to count your first tune. Not that first now that twists back on itself. All moments start from the one when you see how they all must end.

This last quotation has something to do, perhaps, with the poetic brand of theoretical physics practiced by the children's "Da," whose dying message for his implacable daughter is "There's another wavelength everywhere you point your telescope." Guess whether, despite all, Ruth eventually grasps his meaning.

How this 640-page book can be at once so massive and so reductive is perhaps itself a physics problem best left to

David Strom. The novel's biggest potential point is this: "Each of us is alien to every other. Race does nothing but make the fact visible." And yet Powers is interested in nothing but the race of his characters. If they themselves have never had a moment free from being conscious of it, I would say that's less because of their murderous country than because Powers spends the book as their oppressor, squeezing them down into a single dimension. He is sure to be both scorned and applauded for his Styron-like trespass over the color line of subject matter. But once across it he has chosen only to "pass"—which is to say, he has decided to be something other than himself.

In contrast, after a two-novel sex Bender (*Vox* and *The Fermata*, the former famously bought by Monica Lewinsky for Bill Clinton) and a seemingly contrite foray into the mind of a good-hearted nine-year-old girl (*The Everlasting Story of Nory*), Nicholson Baker has returned, in *A Box of Matches*, to his first and best-known literary identity—the miniaturist who publishes entire novels about giving a baby her bottle (*Room Temperature*) or buying a pair of shoelaces during lunch hour (*The Mezzanine*). "We don't want the sum of pain or dissatisfaction to be increased by a writer's printed passage through the world," Baker wrote in *U and I*, his obsessed-fan meditation on John Updike, and in his new novel—a collection of early-morning musings by a forty-four-year-old father of two and editor of medical textbooks—he's creating as little disturbance as possible. Powers may forever be wanting to accomplish something, provoking the reader's short-term "pain or dissatisfaction" as a means of changing the world, but Baker wants only to cherish the small moments of life here on Spaceship Earth. *A Box of Matches* is, I suspect, the only novel ever to carry jacket copy describing it as "the record of an untumultuous month" in the life of its main character.

This is not really a novel at all but a precise gathering of wool (and, at a couple of points, actual navel lint), in which Emmett, the narrator hero, gets up on thirty-two mornings, before his wife and kids, to make himself a pot of coffee and to build a fire. "I pushed open the drawer of the matchbox," he says, "feeling both sides of the inner sliding tray when it emerged to be sure that I wouldn't open it upside down and allow the matches to tumble plinkingly out, and I singled out one match and rolled its square shank between my fingers." The perspective is microscopic, the attitude companionable ("Good morning, it's 5:25 a.m., boys and girls"), the pace contentedly glacial. Emmett muses on the family's pet duck, the dishwasher's retractable tray, the skills required for peeing in the dark, the way to clean spilled root beer off a briefcase. He says he once thought about collecting different paper-towel designs—such as "the sampler-inspired patterns and the alternating pepper grinders and carrots"—until he decided he didn't have



"the acquisitive methodicalness that you need to create a really great paper-towel collection."

All this ought to be unbearably cloying and claustrophobic, but after watching Powers deny his characters the smallest of life's pleasures for 300,000 words, watching Emmett savor his for a mere 40,000 feels like a walk through Big Sky country. Baker avoids preciousness, or at least redeems it, by bravura writing of the sort Powers seems to have

forsworn at political re-education camp. Baker's gift is to notice things ("that abrupt way that people have when they're trying to conserve warmth") and to make metaphor of all he sees: the frozen disks of ice removed from the duck's winter water bowl look "like corneas—the layer of half-dissolved duck food frozen at the upturned bottom is the iris." The Updike to which Baker has always come closest is the writer of tricky light verse.

If Emmett is too gee-whizzy and self-delighting ("oh sweet life," "Oh, I am happy being up like this"), he also contains undercurrents of panic and violence: he tells us, for instance, that he used to entertain suicidal thoughts as a sleep inducement. Our suspicion of his self-suppression—where on earth has all the sex in Baker disappeared to?—gives his insistent appreciation of the little things a certain repulsiveness; the reader keeps wondering if Emmett will turn out to be the man in *One Hour Photo*. That his life remains "untumultuous" is a mark of imaginative restraint and,

in our present state of literary storytelling, perhaps bravery, too. Anchored to his cherished particulars and sentimentality ("We as a family exist to be nice to the duck"), he has little to offer in the way of argument, though some pleading for historical preservation echoes Baker's own nonfiction crusades against the destruction of library card catalogues and newsprint.

Baker's fingerings and sniffings of the tame visible world have a tony ancestry in Montaigne and Burton—but also in a less distinguished pair of modern-day Andys: weird Kaufman and oh-wow Warhol. The narrator of *A Box of Matches* worries about his "creative torpor," and I'd have to say I'm worried about Baker's, too. But it's less troubling to see him treading water in this little book than it is to see Richard Powers, his even more gifted contemporary, drowning in a pool of good intentions. ■

Thomas Mallon is a contributing editor of The Atlantic and the author of In Fact: Essays on Writers and Writing (2001).

PURSUIITS & RETREATS

TRAVELS

THE ROAD TO HERAT

The author, guided by a former Taliban director of investigations, fishes with grenades, visits a notorious outlaw, and stumbles on Lolita in the house of a Pashtun commander

BY ELIZABETH RUBIN

.....

Sami had disappeared. We were planning to head out of Kabul that morning on a road journey to Herat, in western Afghanistan. Sami was to be my guide, and I couldn't find him anywhere. I'd traveled with him in late autumn of 2001, when Kandahar fell, and though he was an unpredictable character—a thirty-four-year-old manic-depressive Pashtun poet and former Taliban intelligence man—his predictions on Afghan affairs had always been flawless.

It was the summer of 2002. Kabul was often swathed in dust storms and rains in the same afternoon. The long-awaited *loya jirga*, which elected Hamid Karzai as Afghanistan's leader, had

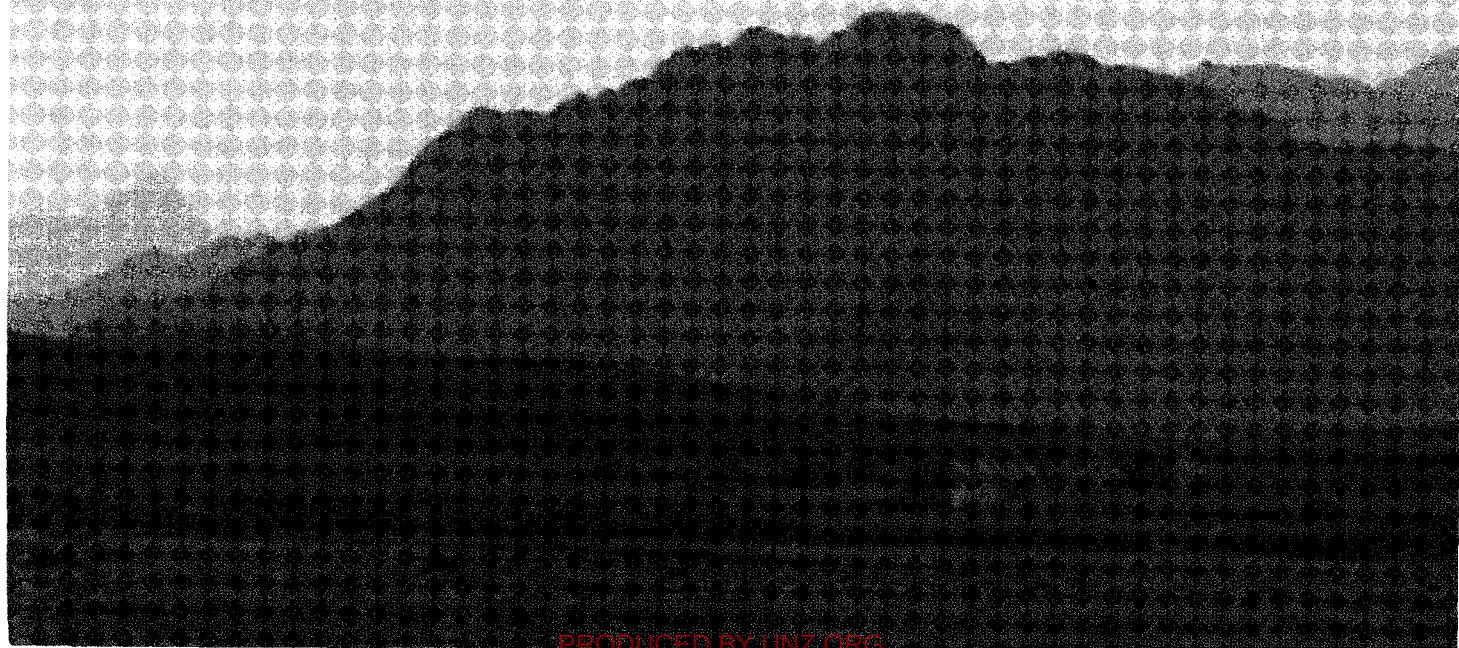
ended in dissatisfaction for many, but relief for most that under the great white tent, more than 1,500 Afghans from around the country, including the warlords, had assembled and talked and shouted for ten days, and no one had been killed.

Sami, however, had come a few days earlier from his home in Kandahar and said that things were not all right. The Pashtun tribes were angry. Discontent and plots of sabotage were brewing down south. As he put it, "They're saying Karzai is a motherfucker and a U.S. spy."

On our trip we planned to find out about these plots and about how volatile the Pashtun discontent really was. Herat

lies due west of Kabul, near the border with Iran, and the only passable road there from Kabul dips south in a 650-mile arc through the southern Pashtun belt. I was bringing along Habib, a thirty-one-year-old human-rights researcher, who I hoped would defuse the unexploded ordnance that was Sami. Habib was half Baluch, half Hazara, and a secular humanist—ethnically, politically, temperamentally, and philosophically the polar opposite of Sami. If Sami was the Confederate, Habib was the Yank.

Habib would be translating for me and collecting data on the civilian casualties of U.S. bombing and on political repression in Herat, where Ismael Khan, a powerful warlord, had appointed himself the city's emir. For Sami, however, our most important goal was to meet his latest national hero, Amanullah Khan, an old rival of Ismael Khan's, whose turf lay south of Herat. Sami painted an image of him out of *Arabian Nights*—the isolated warrior in his mountain redoubt, leading his horse-mounted



brigade into battle against enemy Iranian invaders. And there may have been a morsel of truth in it: Ismael Khan, who had been allied with the Northern Alliance, was now not only rebuffing the central government but under the influence of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards; Amanullah Khan, a Pashtun, was under the wing of Gul Agha Sherzai, America's favored warlord down south.

Habib entered my hotel room with bad news: "The security agents took Sami." Before I could set off after Sami and the agents, Habib politely suggested that I stay put and not make matters worse. We looked over the balcony helplessly, imagining Sami's terror—because he had a lot to hide. As he often said wistfully about his Taliban past, "I was very dangerous."

Sami had joined the Taliban in their early days, in 1994, when they were Islamic guardian angels spreading peace and the end of warlord rule. As a lifelong devotee of the former king, Zahir Shah, Sami, like many other Pashtuns, had believed that the Taliban would finally end Zahir Shah's exile in Rome. The Taliban extinguished that hope as soon as they seized Kabul, but Sami stuck with them. He was educated, and thus rose fast in the ranks of the semi-literate Talibs, soon becoming a director of investigations in Kabul, where he had responsibility for 6,000 prisoners,

many of them from the Northern Alliance—the same sort of men who had ambushed him at my hotel. His power lasted only eight months before the Taliban higher-ups turned their fickle favor away from him, accused him of plotting a coup and supporting the "infidel" Zahir Shah, and threw him into solitary confinement, in the same chambers where he himself had interrogated many a prisoner. He escaped execution when a Taliban friend intervened, and then fled to Pakistan, where for a time he survived by selling his thirty Kalashnikovs for \$200 apiece and by selling carpets.

Since then he's assumed a variety of aliases, but to me he always said, "Just call me Sami." He had just enough education to turn Western culture into scrambled oddities. "Do you all have credit cards that say whether you have HIV?" he once asked me. He was an ethnographer's dream, and his brain was a databank on nearly every Afghan who'd ever touched politics or guns. He knew where many of the old Taliban gang were and what they were doing. He knew, he said, that sixty members of al Qaeda—from Uzbekistan, Chechnya, and other places they couldn't return to—were hiding in a gorge in the north. He knew about plots to rally the Taliban around Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, a Pashtun career warlord. And he knew

how to play dumb, as I learned when he finally showed up at my hotel room, shaking. "I will slaughter a sheep," he said, whipping his shawl around the room, "as soon as we're out of this fucking Kabul." It turned out that the intelligence mafia who controlled my hotel were in a fury that I'd rejected their car and driver. So when they saw Sami, who they knew was with me, they re-routed him into a back room to investigate why. Putting on his naive and humble act, he told them, "Because she's crazy."

Late that afternoon Sami rounded up a driver and a Toyota Corolla with jammed rear windows and no air-conditioning (it was above 100° most days), and we set off as the waning sun brushed Kabul's parched hills with amber and gold. Soon we were moving through the fertile green pastures of Maidanshar, a valley known as the gateway to Kabul—partly because it's only fifteen miles south of the capital, and thus within artillery range.

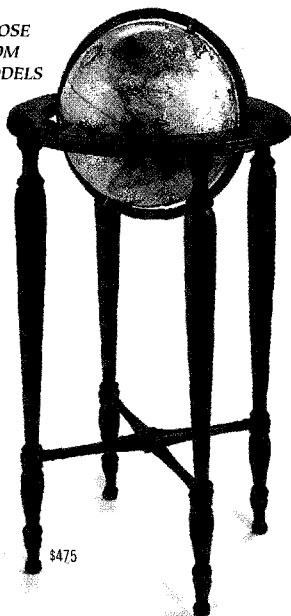
The valley was home turf for Sami, where he'd found his wife, and he was back in his element. He pointed to a mountain peak that he'd occupied with Taliban forces just before they swept into Kabul, in 1996. He cursed the little mosques that spring up like McDonald's arches on the interstate, erected by the Al-Rashid Trust, a charity of "the motherfucker Pakistanis who occupied

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our Afghanistan." He told us about an old blue-domed shrine we saw in the distance, where infertile or unhappy women go to expel the devil spirits. "She goes mad, shouts, screams, lather comes from her mouth, and with hypnosis the mullah can cure the madwoman," he said. "Or just get her pregnant."

Some sixty miles from Kabul, Sami directed us off the main road and through the desert hills. Our feeble headlights were the only signs of life in the darkness. After two hours of bumping and twisting, we saw a faint light appear and then resolve into an oil lamp, a checkpoint, a squat mud-walled shop, and a boy with a Kalashnikov. Life. We had entered Governor Ruhani Nangialai Wardak's territory. A guide squished into our car and led us to the governor's isolated compound.

In Afghanistan a stranger rolling up unannounced in the night is almost always guaranteed the hospitality of the desert. Dinner, cushions, and blankets were all delivered by one of Ruhani's men. That night we all slept together in Ruhani's communal room, which had bookcases stuffed with books of Islamic law, Persian poetry, and a surprising collection (for a Pashtun commander) of French and English paperbacks—Françoise Sagan's *Un Certain Sourire*, Antonin Artaud's *Voyage to America*, and even *Lolita*.

The next morning Ruhani arrived for breakfast to greet us. He was a tall, thin man with a regal yet modest bearing. A supporter of Zahir Shah, Ruhani spoke English and had traveled to the United States three times during Taliban days to encourage U.S.-Afghan relations. He must have been thrilled to have company. He drove us up through a gorge, past emerald waters, to a high mountain range, where in Russian times he'd hidden an explosives laboratory, and where Bernard Kouchner, a founder of Doctors Without Borders, had hidden a field hospital for the *mujahideen*. But all day, no matter what the story, Ruhani kept returning to one theme—America. He couldn't understand us.

These loathed old warlords and fundamentalists making trouble everywhere, for example. Why were we sup-

porting them—again? In the eyes of many Afghans, America had created the *mujahideen* to keep the Communists from the warm sea, had bankrolled their return to fight Osama, and had then allowed them to be sanctified under the great white tent of democracy.

And why did we pull this trick—pushing for the return of Zahir Shah, only to render him powerless? Here was the heart of the matter for many Pashtuns, whose royal dynasty, the Durrani, founded the Afghan kingdom in 1747 and reigned until 1978. The Pashtuns, who make up about 40 percent of the population, still regard themselves as the rightful rulers of Afghanistan, but they fear that for the first time in the country's



Habib

history power has shifted from Pashto speakers (southerners and easterners) to Dari speakers (northerners and westerners). (Dari is the name of the Farsi spoken by Afghans.) Zahir Shah, a Durrani, was meant to ease their way back into the palace. Hamid Karzai is a Pashtun, but he's seen as a caged bird of the former Northern Alliance minorities—particularly the Tajiks—who fill the ranks of the power ministries, people like General Mohammed Fahim, the Tajik Defense Minister. Before the *loya jirga* Fahim had warned diplomats and journalists that he would start a civil war if the old king ran for power. So when the U.S. envoy got wind of a petition, signed by a majority of *loya jirga* delegates, to nominate Zahir Shah as leader of the country, he panicked and convened an emergency press conference at the American embassy to announce that Zahir Shah would not run. It was a public-relations gaffe, a trifle in recent Afghan history, but it sent an alarm to the suspicious Pashtun tribesmen: This was a coup against the people!

Americans are not only occupiers, they're anti-Pashtun!

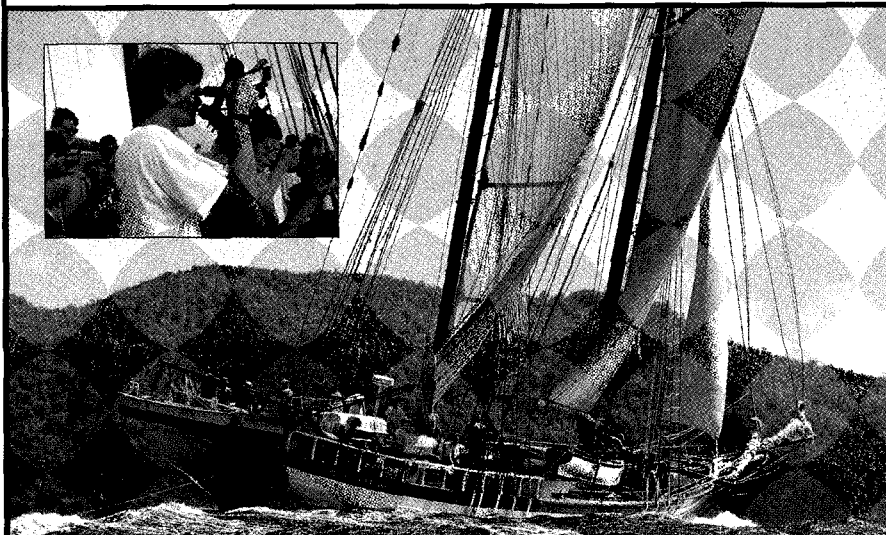
Then, when the eighty-seven-year-old king stood up to open the *loya jirga*, his microphone died. TV screens snapped and frizzled. A minute or so after his speech ended, the technical glitch was miraculously fixed. That was the final mockery. "Everyone knows it was a plot," Sami said, delighted that Ruhani had brought up the matter.

Ruhani kept saying, "I'm confused," and I could see why. America has shaped not only the political history of Afghanistan but also the personal narrative of nearly every Afghan, and yet America is a fickle benefactor, bestowing graces and acknowledging the attachment only when it suits her.

As we traced our way back down a ravine, a shepherd dog nearly attacked us to protect his masters—a Kuchi nomad family, tucked under a rocky outcropping. A white-bearded man with scrawny legs waved down Ruhani: Come for tea, yogurt. We'll kill a sheep. You'll spend the night. We shared some tea with rancid milk, and the old man told us his family had just been kicked off the Hazara lands that lay behind the high peaks. His wife stared at me: what was this girl doing in the mountains with men? "Don't worry, Auntie," Ruhani said. "Western girls are just like men." She nodded, thinking about that. She was a beautiful but worn woman, with thirteen children. She wore paint on her forehead, silver bangles in her ears and up her arms, and a dusty embroidered dress. She was prattling away, her dazzling green eyes still staring at me, and I asked Habib what she was saying. "Alas," he translated, "I don't have any heavy artillery or I could have killed all those motherfucker Hazara and grazed my sheep back there."

The next morning we sat with Ruhani amid his apricot orchards and poplar trees. Sami was puffed up now by the fresh, safe Pashtun air, and he began briefing Ruhani on the mischief down south. The Taliban forces were regrouping, he said. The man primed to replace the fugitive one-eyed Taliban leader, Mullah Omar (largely disgraced for losing the war to the Americans), was Hekmatyar. Though he was probably the most anti-Western and most brutal of the

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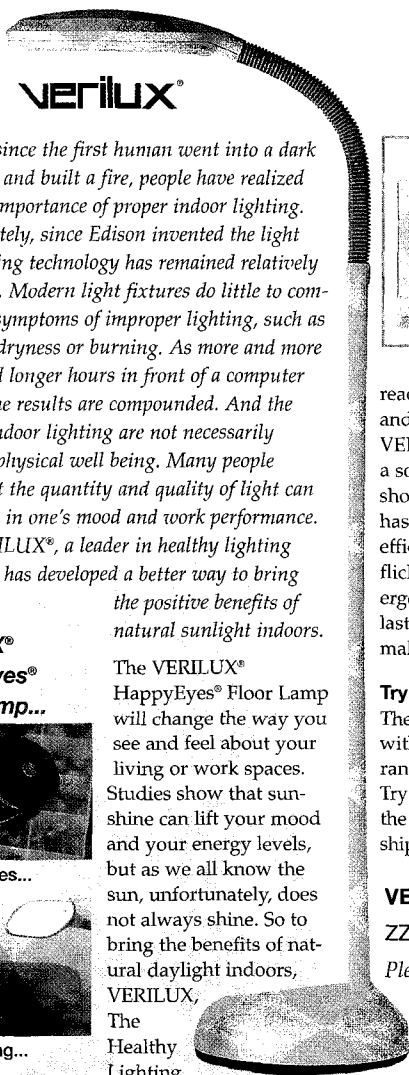
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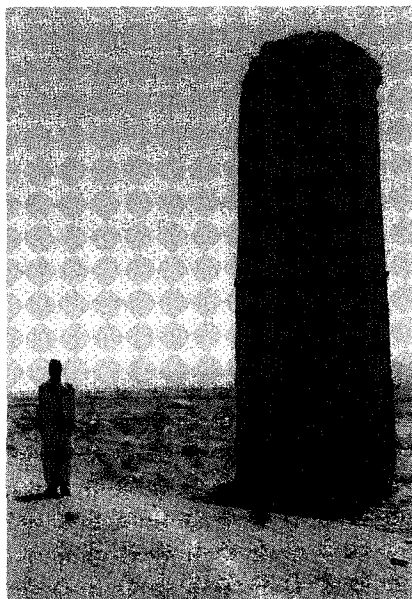
seven Soviet-era *mujahideen* leaders, Hekmatyar was plied with the most money and guns by the Americans and the Pakistanis. Most Afghans despised him and had been comforted to know of his exile in Iran. But after Bush's "axis of evil" speech, Tehran booted him out, and he sneaked back into eastern Afghanistan, near the border of Pakistan.

Sami said Hekmatyar was promising Mullah Omar's followers that he would organize them and fund a *jihad* against the new government and the American invaders. Sami sounded worried. But then he slapped his hands together and said, "Even I will give my money and ammunition to anyone who rises up and lays mines to destroy the U.S. Army, because I am so dissatisfied with this northern government, and motherfucker America is supporting it." He laughed and laughed. And Ruhani laughed. And Habib laughed. And we all laughed. But Ruhani was also shaking his head. His four wives and sixteen children were refugees in Pakistan. Though war had been his craft for twenty-two years, since he was eighteen, he'd now lost his appetite for fighting. When we got in our car to leave, Sami said, "He's not so important. He's from a weak tribe."

We traveled south, past nomad camps and camel caravans, toward the Dasht-i-Margo, or Desert of Death. Eerie rock formations and ancient fortresses melded with sand dunes. Variety outside the car dried up altogether, and my thoughts drifted to Sami and Habib. On the road Sami would often tell stories about the arbitrary and dangerous nature of Taliban rule. In Ghazni, between Kabul and Kandahar, he recalled a friend whom the mullahs had caught sleeping with a woman not his wife. The mullahs sent him to Sami. They wanted a military tribunal and death. Sami overruled them and saved the friend's life. "Every year," Sami said, "he sends me a—how do you call that one? Gift. Yes. A two-hundred-kilogram sack of almonds." Once he had to prepare two seats in an aircraft flying from Kabul to Kandahar for some friends who were transporting four containers of uranium. The uranium belonged, Sami said, to a businessman who had bought it in

Russia, and the Taliban planned to sell it to Pakistan. Whenever we met recalcitrant Talibs who were thwarting Karzai's attempts to extend his weak rule to the provinces, Sami embraced them. Yet he also regularly railed against Islamic fundamentalists for sinking his people into the Dark Ages—just as he railed against deceitful America for fertilizing Afghanistan with weapons, not education.

Habib—who liked to call himself our “cold-blooded, laconic translator in the



Sami

back,” and who always carried with him a collection of Tolstoy, Chekhov, and Hemingway short stories, in English—watched Sami with bemusement and even respect, for who knew when this human information bank might come in handy?

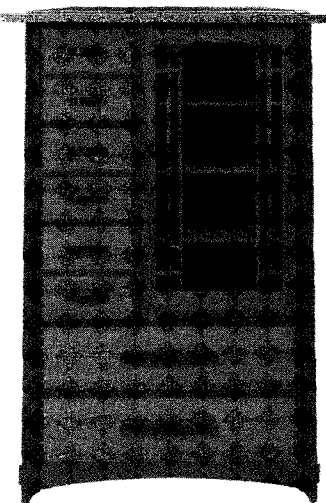
When we heard that the Americans had bombed a Pashtun wedding party, killing dozens, it was Habib—Sami's Farsiphone nemesis—and not Sami who rushed us to the hospital in Kandahar to interview the survivors. In one room a wounded seventeen-year-old girl wrestling with her bedsheets surveyed me and Habib with loathing and in a delirium spat out, “Yes, mother-fucker, I was there, at the wedding. Why not? I fucked the wedding.” Her mother and father and brother, she said, had been killed. “Why do you Americans bomb us first and then come and ask us stupid questions?” she asked. Then she rolled toward the wall. Habib suggested it was time to leave.

Unlike Sami, who entertained us for hours with his war stories, Habib was reserved about his past. Only later did I discover the Dickensian saga that lay behind his self-possession. He had been born into a family with prospects. His father was a successful doctor, with a beautiful wife and a car. “Life was sweet,” Habib said—until the Communists staged their coup, in 1978, and arrested his father. He was never seen again. The family moved in with his father's brother, Anwar, who wanted revenge and helped the *mujahideen* with nighttime ambushes. His house became a bomb-making factory. One night Habib was jolted awake by a shattering explosion. One of the bomb-makers was killed, others emerged blackened. One, Habib said, had “the meat falling out of his shoulders.” His injured uncle Anwar told Habib and his family to flee for their lives. They ran into the night so fast that his grandmother and mother forgot their chadors.

The police swept the neighborhood, and Habib's mother, rather than see her children tortured, surrendered herself along with her infant. She was given electric shocks but still refused to betray the other resisters. Though she developed rheumatism and lost her breast milk, she kept her baby alive. Habib, his grandmother, and his siblings, now a marked family, hid with a relative down south. Nearly a year later, when the Russians invaded and installed a softer Communist leader, Habib's mother was released, along with thousands of other political prisoners. At one point on our trip Habib began to describe the reunion with his mother but then melted under the memory. “It was such a—okay,” he said. “Leave it.”

It was then, he said with a nervous laugh, that “the difficult times in our life began.” It was wartime. His family had no food, no decent shoes, and lived on a cold Kabul mountain. Habib was nine. He went to work in a candy factory, squatting for nine hours a day to guide sweet steaming paste as it oozed out of a machine. He was paid enough for ten pieces of bread a month.

Twice he was chosen for a scholarship to study in the Eastern bloc, and twice it was rescinded at the last minute. Then, in the 1990s, after the Russians



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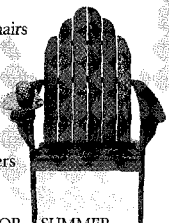
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had withdrawn, a local commander in their district was nearly assassinated and accused his uncle, who quickly escaped. Habib and his brother were imprisoned instead, until the townspeople protested and the two of them were released. His face still bears scars from the branches with which his jailer whipped him.

A soft time in Habib's life soon followed. A friend offered his sister as a bride to Habib, and he accepted. Was he happy with her? "Why not?" he asked. "It's not good to be unhappy." An uncle working with the UN gave him money for law school in Mazar-i-Sharif. Just as he was finishing his last exams, the front lines fell to the Taliban. Habib fled on what became a twelve-day odyssey through the mountains, where Taliban forces twice nearly executed him. As soon as he made it to his home town, he and his friends began plotting sabotage. They practiced making and laying bombs. They met with exiled intellectuals in Pakistan, who promised them money, and drew up a charter for a secularist rebellion—just to make a constant hell, he said, "for those Taliban invaders." But the money never materialized; the group dispersed, and Habib went miserably defeated into exile in Pakistan, where a friend set him up as director of a new computer-and-English school. He remained there until after September 11, when he heard President George Bush's voice accusing the Taliban on the radio. "Oh, God, happy thanks," he said to himself. "This is the end. We are going back."

Our rendezvous with Amanullah Khan, not far south of Herat, was arranged by satellite phone. Because Amanullah was an outlaw in the eyes of Herat's self-appointed emir, Ismael Khan, he couldn't venture near the main road. Sami led us down several side roads in search of Amanullah's men, but night was falling, and it was impossible to distinguish one stretch of desert from another. Ismael Khan's soldiers stopped us at the edge of a small canyon and said we couldn't go on. "We can't guarantee your safety," one of them said. "Amanullah Khan's bandits work these roads, and we don't work at night."

A rational man. But Sami was not. We had a date to keep. Besides, a fox had

just streaked across our path—"a sign in our culture," he said, "that your travels will be a success."

Habib believed the soldiers and didn't want to move. Besides, an hour before, Habib had seen a hare flit across our path—"a sign in our culture," he said, "that your travels will fail."

We settled the matter by hiring two of Ismael's soldiers to ride with us. We dropped them at a small bazaar, switched off our lights, and then drifted off the road. We flashed our high beams a few times. Nothing happened. Finally we saw faint beams signaling back in the distance, and soon we were surrounded by Amanullah's soldiers—a band of men crammed into three pickup trucks, their white sneakers dangling over the edges. As the western vanguard of the Pashtuns, they were well stocked with uniforms, weapons, and food by the governor of Kandahar, Gul Agha, who was in a cold war with Ismael Khan.

After another hour of desert travel we pulled into Amanullah Khan's isolated compound. We found Amanullah folded up on a red cushion, leaning against a hanging prayer rug, surrounded by guests. Unlike the other warlords I'd met, who were burly and well fed, Amanullah was reptilian, small, and sickly—an old host to malaria and tuberculosis. He picked at dinner and then swallowed a dose of tablets from several packets. Sami, meanwhile, was on a roll. The uprising against Karzai and the northerners, he said, was about to begin in the east; soon it would spread to the south. He leaned closer to Amanullah, as if offering inside information. "Even Kandahar won't tolerate it any longer," he said, lying.

That night I realized the extent to which Sami had been traveling on a frolic of his own, hoping to stir his listeners to action with exaggerated stories of rebellion elsewhere. When I suggested that he lay off the rabble-rousing while we were together, he hissed, "At least I'm not an Iranian spy," and then glowered at Habib as he entered the room.

Iran, Karzai, America, Tajiks—they all swirled in his confused mind like satellites of the same enemy who'd conspired to destroy the purpose of his entire adult life, which was to bring back Zahir Shah. It was irrelevant that the old

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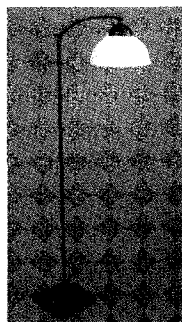
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king suffered from shingles and was too feeble to rule. For millions of Afghans like Sami, the king had become a mythic figure. He represented a long-lost Afghan Eden of peace and fertility. And then along came America and Karzai, who snuffed him out.

Sami's futile quest had been fueled, in part, by the abrupt loss of his idyllic childhood and of his father, who'd been a judge in the kingdom for thirty years. When Sami was nine, his father disappeared, and was assumed to have been executed during the Communist purges, along with more than 12,000 people, mostly from the educated elite, like Habib's father.

Sami's family fled to Pakistan, where he was forced to stay with his sister and her radical husband, who belonged to Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's executive committee. Sami ran away, studied politics and religion, fired rockets at the Russians during holidays, joined a Pashtun royalist party, and had a rude awakening to Cold War politics when he discovered that the Americans were backing extremists like Hekmatyar, over the moderates and the royalists, to fight the Russians. As a friend in the U.S. military explained to him, "They're better killers." This time around Sami had imagined that America might get it right, clean up its Cold War mess. Instead Hekmatyar was back in action. The Americans were funding warlords. Sami was bewildered, and someone had to be blamed.

The next day Amanullah took us for a ride through a valley of wheat fields, orchards, and villages of beehive-shaped houses. He stopped by the river and fished lazily, with grenades. He had been fighting Ismael Khan for several years, and thousands were dead—many here on this land. Though Amanullah believed he was protecting persecuted Pashtuns from Ismael, now, with all the ideology stripped away, the two men looked just like old rivals battling it out for control of the lucrative drug-smuggling and trade routes that run through the region and into Iran.

Amanullah told us that after the most recent clash between the two men, which had come on the heels of the Taliban's retreat, the Iranian Revolutionary Guards had stepped in and taken both

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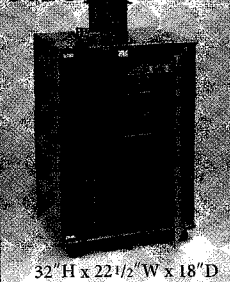
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of them out to the desert. "The Iranians told us, like a father advising his sons, 'It's not the time to fight among yourselves,'" Amanullah said. "Analyze what's around you. Infidel American troops have invaded and captured your country. They'll give you no power. Forget your hostility, and face the Americans together.' They told us to hug, and we hugged, and the Iranians shouted, '*Allahu Akbar!*'" The Iranians said they would go home and get approval to bring supplies from Iran for the fight against the United States. "I refused," Amanullah said. "I knew they'd deceive us. We're with Gul Agha and Karzai"—America's men. But Ismael is with the Iranians, who have helped to fund and train his standing army of 15,000 soldiers, the largest private army of all the warlords.

We left Amanullah Khan behind and drove toward the ancient walls of an extinct castle on a rocky peak, where Ismael Khan's men were perched with binoculars and artillery. Sami, who views Iran as an evil encroacher, said of Amanullah, "This great man would be so useful for Americans against the Iranians. But they'll never use him properly."

We arrived in Herat, the former capital of the Timurid Empire. Red rock and forests of jack pines had replaced the desert. A fourteenth-century citadel still towers over the city, and five of ten minarets designed by Queen Gawhar Shad, the daughter-in-law of Tamerlane and the patroness of the Timurid Renaissance, still stand, tilting in the distance like giant dead palm trees.

We were back in the Dari-speaking world. Sami's Pashtun jingoism grew into a flaming rash, but Habib relaxed visibly. He noticed, however, that his old friends here, along with everyone else, were more afraid to speak about politics than people elsewhere had been. Everyone we talked to implied that Ismael Khan was indeed dictatorial, but that Herat, unlike most of Afghanistan, was flourishing and relatively safe—as long as you didn't challenge the emir. Business was booming. Construction was everywhere. Ismael Khan was building an ambitious new library. Still, Taliban-style social laws had darkened his image—despite his visits to the hos-

pitals where two or three women a week were being brought after dousing themselves with petrol and setting themselves on fire, because they saw no other means of escaping their domestic misery.

Inside the vast courtyard of the Masjid-i-Jami, or Friday Mosque, which had been restored over the past fifty years to reveal exuberant lapis, green, yellow, and red mosaics and Koranic script, a woman in a burka ignored a soldier who was trying to push her away from the central altar, where she was praying. There, a few days earlier, Ismael Khan had led a mourning ceremony for Haji Qadir, a Vice President of Afghanistan and an old *mujahid*, who had just been assassinated in Kabul. Ismael railed against the "coalition forces" (that is, the United States), who, he suggested, were behind the killing, and excited the crowd so much that some chanted back, Iranian-style, "Death to America!" and "Long live Ismael Khan!"

We visited Queen Gawhar Shad's mausoleum, where a crew of American military men in civilian dress were also sightseeing. An Italian aid worker later remarked, "Their visibility is a message to Iran: 'Take your nose out of Afghan affairs.'"

At the shrine of a famous Sufi poet Sami prayed, kissed the tomb, and then lay on the ground, his head on a small stone and his arms crossed over his face. He rolled over and over to the edge of the garden. The aim was to roll straight. He tried the roll twice, each time arcing too far south. "It means you're still disturbed inside," a young man who was watching told us. "You haven't attained spiritual health."

Sami knew this. He was a frustrated man. It partly explained his poor Tom act. He had things to tell. Information. He was onto all the troublemakers, and he was used to a double life. When he fled the Taliban, the man who harbored him, at a refugee camp in Pakistan, was the Wahhabist Abdul Rasul Sayyaf, an avowed enemy of the king and of the United States. Sami played the mole, nodding his head to Sayyaf's plans for sabotage, even writing subversive letters for Sayyaf. But all the time he was collecting facts. Now he wanted to tell America of the dangers. "America is

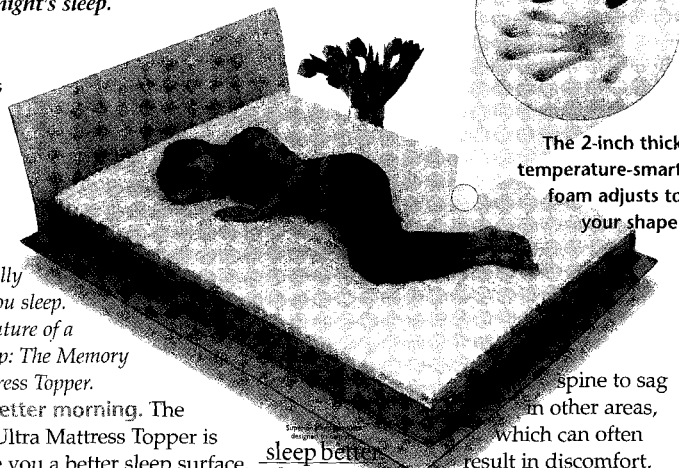
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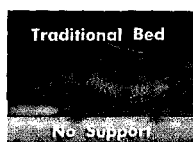
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only controlling the public highways," he said, "but the village roads and mosques are still under control of her enemies." And he wanted to be important. Everyone touched by America bloomed in his fellows' eyes. The United States may have been the great infidel, but it was also the bestower of power.

Earlier in the year Sami had called me from the desert, in the middle of an anxiety attack. "I'm so unhappy," he said. He'd made a deal with the Americans to coax the former Taliban commander of Jalalabad, Abdul Salam "Rocketi," out of hiding, to negotiate an amnesty. Or so the Americans had told him. At the last moment Rocketi had received a message that he was on the Americans' blacklist. He was sure they would arrest him, so he reneged on the deal. "I am so ashamed," Sami said. "What will I tell them?" He wondered if he should return the expense money that the Americans had given him. "Finally, God gave us this opportunity for peace and development, and we will lose it," he said miserably. He'd seen plots to sabotage the new administration being hatched everywhere by Hekmatyar and former members of the Taliban. But after Rocketi the Americans had little use for him.

There are thousands of Samis today, wandering Afghanistan's deserts and mountains like zombies created by the twentieth century's big ideas—communism, Islamism, Americanism. If they get their own people back in power, with guns if need be, at least then, they think, the future will be secure. In the meantime, they are governed by the irrational, by unknowable foreigners, by conspiracies, and by God's plans.

Sami's predictions have since all come to pass. Hekmatyar has met with powerful troublemakers, including, allegedly, Ismael Khan, and was most likely behind an attempt to assassinate Karzai in Kandahar. So I had an ominous feeling when Sami called me again the other day, on a friend's satellite phone. He wanted to tell me about a commander he had met, not far from his wife's village, who was plotting to burn schools and to attack Kabul. There was a delay on the line, and then he asked, "Who should I tell?" ■

Elizabeth Rubin is a writer who lives in New York.

STUFFED SMOKED SABLEFISH*Pacific Northwest ingredients, Asian theme*

BY CORBY KUMMER

.....

Pristine, scenic Vancouver can be forgiven for thinking that it offers the best of the Northwest—Seattle without the grunge and the caffeine buzz. The cuisine that has evolved there in recent decades is similar to Seattle's, with beautifully fresh fish, mushrooms, and berries as the stars, supported by Asian condiments and techniques.

For example, at his celebrated sushi bar and restaurant Hidekazu Tojo puts into the best sushi I've ever tasted ingredients closely associated with both the Northwest and Japan: say, chilled avocado, zucchini, and mango and a single hot tempura shrimp wrapped in a thin slice of cucumber. His other dishes are just as original.

On a recent visit to Vancouver, I procured a recipe that demonstrates Tojo's ability to transform a few northwestern ingredients into a strikingly Asian-themed dish. It starts with sablefish, also called black cod, which is as richly flavored as (and even oilier than) Pacific salmon (it is unrelated to cod, and is found only in the Pacific). Jews have long known the lush glories of smoked sablefish, the Beluga of the deli counter, whose presence at a buffet denotes a milestone event.

I got the recipe from Nathan Fong, an indefatigable food stylist and cooking teacher who patiently guided me around the markets and various Chinatown neighborhoods (there are four) of Vancouver. "I eat Japanese as often as Chinese," Fong, the third generation of his Cantonese family to be in the food business, told me, reflecting the city's free mixing of Asian influences. "And Tojo's presentations are some of the most brilliant I've ever seen."

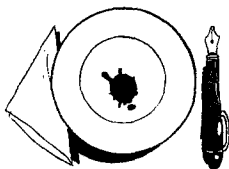
The dish is elegant in conception: Marinated mushrooms and asparagus along with fresh mango slices are stuffed into smoked fillets and heated just until the flavors meld.

To serve two people generously or four as a first course, you'll need four quarter-pound fillets of smoked sablefish. If your fishmonger carries sablefish, ask for the fillets to be as close to square as possible. You can mail-order smoked sablefish from many sources, including Port Chatham, a highly regarded Seattle fish smoker, at www.portchatham.com. Taste the fillets, and if they seem excessively salty, rinse them carefully in cold water before using.

Few fresh mushrooms have the flavor of the matsutake (also called pine mushroom), a variety so prized in Japan that, like numerous other delicacies there, it has generated a near cult. Its texture is chewy, its flavor delicate, perfumed, and distinctive. Northwestern mushroom hunters swap fish stories about the huge matsutake they have come upon; commercial hunters in the Northwest are said to carry guns.

Dried matsutake are available, but they're not as good for eating and cooking as dried shiitake—the best substitute here for fresh matsutake (the dried ones are closer in flavor and texture to fresh matsutake). Fong points out that for safety it is important to cook dried mushrooms as thoroughly as you would fresh ones; simply soaking and reconstituting them can leave pathogens or larvae intact. Jack Czarnecki, a leading American writer of mushroom guides and cookbooks (*A Cook's Book of Mushrooms* is the easiest to use), calls overnight soaking "cruel and unusual punishment." He recommends placing dried mushrooms in water to cover, bringing them to a raging boil, and then simmering them over medium heat for about twenty minutes.

Assuming that no foraging friend has arrived with a large fresh matsutake, place one large (about two inches in diameter) or two medium dried shiitake caps in a small saucepan with a half cup



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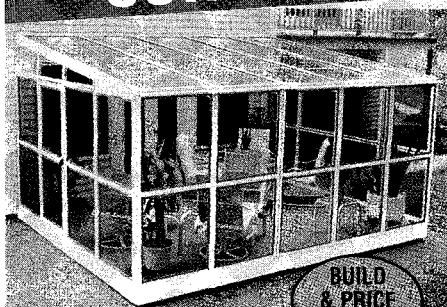
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of water and bring to a hard boil. Simmer over medium heat for ten to fifteen minutes while you prepare the other stuffing ingredients and the marinade. Trim four medium asparagus stalks, slice them in half lengthwise, and cut them into pieces two inches long. Peel one just-ripe medium mango and slice it into pieces roughly two inches long and a half inch thick.

For the marinade, mix in a saucepan one tablespoon of soy sauce, one tablespoon of mirin (sweet rice wine; you can substitute sherry), and a quarter cup of chicken stock or, preferably, dashi, the bonito broth that is the base of many Japanese soups and stocks. (My preferred writer on Japanese cooking is Elizabeth Andoh.) Drain the mushrooms and slice them into ribbons an eighth of an inch thick. Add the sliced mushrooms to the marinade and cook gently for two to three minutes. Lift out the mushrooms and reserve. Simmer the asparagus pieces for two or three minutes in the same hot marinade and remove them.

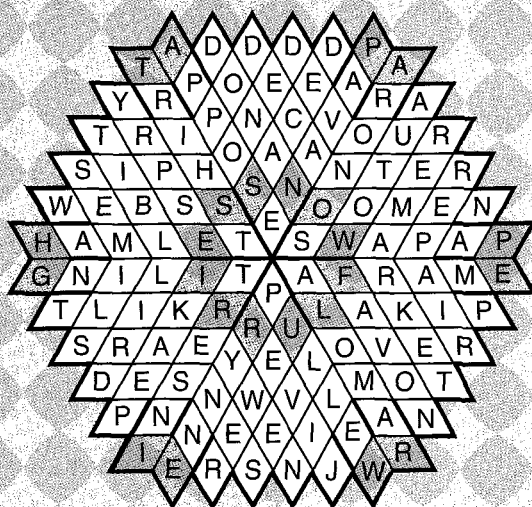
Have ready four sheets of parchment paper or foil, nine or ten inches square, and a baking sheet. Parchment paper is the ideal wrapping, because some of the liquid evaporates, and flavors are concentrated as a result; foil is a fine second best. Preheat the oven to 425° and set a rack in the middle.

Cut each fillet nearly in half. Open a cut fillet so that it lies flat. Place a quarter each of the mushrooms and asparagus, and two or three mango slices on the open fillet, roughly parallel with the closed side. Close the fillet, pushing back in any bits of stuffing that may fall out. The smoked fish is fragile, and the stuffed fillets will be messy. Don't worry. Place each fillet in the center of one of the sheets and tightly fold the paper or foil around it, using the wrapping to encourage a cylindrical shape. Fold each end as if for a gift and tuck the excess paper or foil beneath the log. Place the closed packets on the baking sheet and bake for ten minutes.

This dish needs no sauce or garnish, not even Fong's suggested lime slices. The full flavors speak for themselves. **■**

Corby Kummer is a senior editor of The Atlantic.

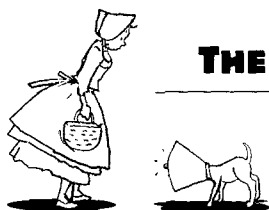
ANSWERS TO THE DECEMBER PUZZLER



"Crystal Ball"

The Crystal Ball is a PAPERWEIGHT, and its prediction is SNOW FLURRIES.

Clear: 1-8. D(O)NA; (m)OMEN(t) 2-7. DE(C)ANYIER 3-6. DEVO(U)R (*roved rev.*) 5-12. AU + TO; A + V + ON 6-11. REMARK + ET 7-10. REP + AIR 9-16. P(I)K + A; EWER (*you were* homophone) 10-15. RE + VOL(V)ES 11-14. TOMLIN (anag.) 13-20. J + TVE; KI(L)T 14-19. NE(WYE)ARS 15-18. SE(N + S)ED 17-24. PEAK (homophone); S + PRY 18-23. DRILL + BIT 19-22. S + LIMS 21-4. WEB'S; A G(E)D 22-3. SI + PHONED (*is rev.*) 23-2. TRIP + OD (pun) **Unclear:** a. P(A + V)ANE b. T-SHIRT (anag.) c. ALOMAR (hidden) d. WE + LL UP (*pull rev.*) e. AP(PO)SE f. PA + PAWS g. IN(S)ERT h. A + FRAM + E (*farm anag.*) i. PRYNE (odd letters) j. HAM + LET k. S + O + NOR + A l. TIL(T)ING



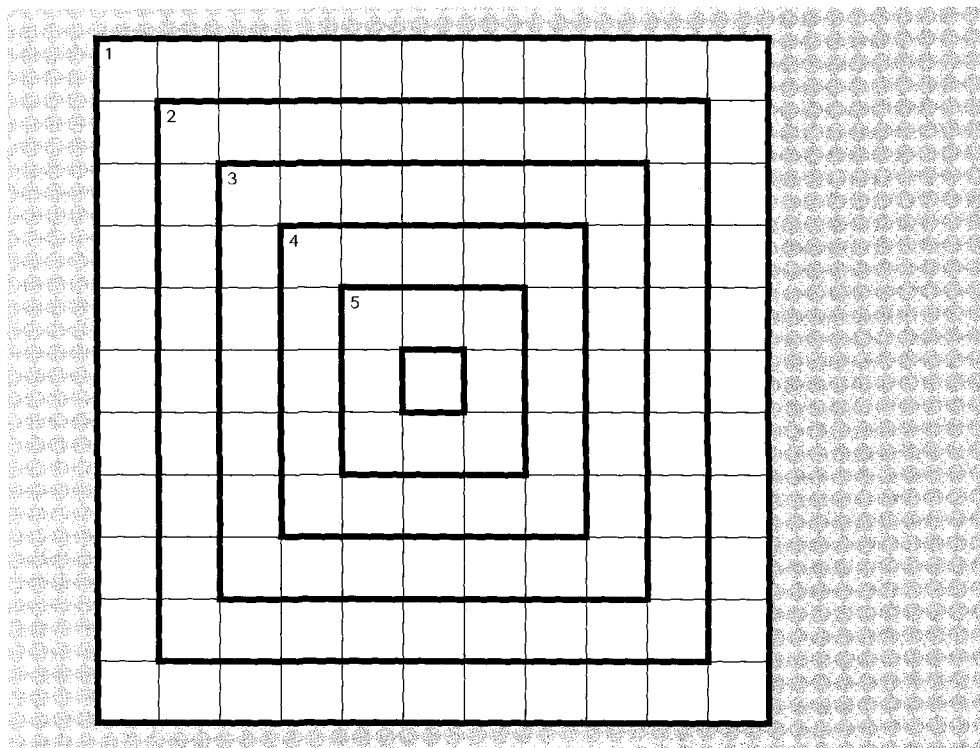
THE PUZZLER

by EMILY COX and HENRY RATHVON

Target Practice

Answers to this puzzle's clues are to be entered horizontally and vertically without regard to heavy bars, though if bars were used to show where entries begin and end, their pattern would be the same if the grid were rotated 180°. Some letters are unchecked (used by only one entry). Clues are given in no special order under the number of the innermost Ring occupied by any of their letters; to get you oriented, the answer to the first clue in Ring 1 is an Across. When all answers have been entered, four unclued entries will be seen to occupy the central row and the central column. Two of these will show who shot what; the other two, when made to share the properly filled central square, will indicate the target of the shooting and its outcome. One clue answer is capitalized.

Last month's Puzzler solution is on page 206.



RING 1

- a. Company One's taking fifty pops (5)
- b. In two seconds, check shots (5)
- c. Transmitted live band on the radio, edited (6)
- d. Stole about a pound in Panamanian currency (6)
- e. Ego involved in action and thought (6)
- f. Plaster burn with bit of mud (5)
- g. Assures the security of commandos in the Navy (5)
- h. Cipher in sounds of bells and drums (6)

RING 2

- a. Head of Oscars wearing awful, semitransparent fabric (5)
- b. Spot double agent (4)
- c. Gold-framed stamp is so long (5)
- d. Former look adopted by caprice (6)
- e. Pale-skinned person out on bail (6)
- f. Property of food, ordinarily? (4)

- g. Second-rate pasta is for dogs (7)
- h. Outline in favor of going back into reactor (7)

RING 3

- a. Dance band's leader riding in big car (5)
- b. Bizarre, meandering route (5)
- c. Old fifth of Scotch seen in recent find (6)
- d. Showed most of a portion of *Deliverance* (6)
- e. Sound from a horse thief? (6)
- f. For auditors, change site for forming a union (5)
- g. Mom catches black snake (5)
- h. Spam is scattered here and there (6)

RING 4

- a. Warn the French in pictures (5)
- b. With a disc pinching, the guy was hurting (5)

- c. Made even uncle, in time, embarrassed (5)
- d. A Latin love returned perfume (5)

RING 5

- a. Split stick (6)
- b. Dread President's ultimate mistake (6)
- c. Oakland ball club breaking Harper's contract (5)
- d. Heads of Orion and Universal, along with Disney, backing ban (6)
- e. Perform *2001* in bed (6)
- f. Independent votes against symbols (5)
- g. Brace coastline (5)
- h. Oh, for a musical show (5)

Note: The instructions above are for this month's puzzle only. It is assumed that you know how to decipher clues. For a complete introduction to clue-solving send an addressed, stamped long envelope to The Atlantic Puzzler, 77 North Washington Street, Boston, Mass. 02114.

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by BARBARA WALLRAFF

PAUL WOLFSON, of Washington, D.C., writes, "I have always thought that *first-generation American* referred to someone who was the first person in a family line to be born in the United States. But a friend insists that *first-generation American* may refer to someone who immigrates here and becomes a U.S. citizen. Who is right? Have I suddenly changed from a third-generation to a fourth-generation American?"

Dictionaries define, and newspaper and magazine citations use, the term both ways. Strangely enough, *first-generation* seems never to have had one unmistakable meaning. At least, the earliest dictionary entry I've been able to find, in *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* (1961), reads like this: "1: born in the U.S.—used of an American of immigrant parentage 2: FOREIGN-BORN—used of a naturalized American." So the term is useless, I'm afraid, except where context clarifies which of its meanings is intended. And that's not much of an exception, because if other words make the point, why make it again?

LEE SECHREST, of Tucson, Arizona, writes, "What on earth has befallen the poor word *traditional*? It is now so widely used to mean 'typical; usual; common' that it appears in danger of losing its, well, traditional meaning. This morning I read in the paper that the use of prescription drugs is growing faster among children than it is among 'senior citizens and baby boomers, the two *traditionally* high consumer groups.' What is that tradition? Is it like Nativity scenes at Christmas, the Easter bunny, the display of the flag on the Fourth of July? Recently I have encountered the notions that *traditionally* males outnumber females in certain occupations, that *traditionally* high school dropout rates are higher among Hispanic students, that *traditionally* the

stock market goes down under certain circumstances, and on and on. Is there nothing that can be done?"

The adverb *traditionally*, more than the adjective *traditional*, does indeed often stray from the usual meaning of *tradition*: a custom or practice intentionally handed down through the generations. That is, *traditionally* is often pressed into service to characterize things that were, simply, typical or common in the past. Drift like this isn't particularly unusual in English though. *Particular*, for instance, has at least one familiar sense, "choosy," that isn't reflected in *particularly*, and the



idea of an *exception* doesn't necessarily come to mind when one reads *exceptionally*, which for the most part is a fancy substitute for *very*. In any case, I think there *is* nothing that can, or should, be done to drag *traditionally* back to its roots.

STANLEY BONCZEK, of Edison, New Jersey, writes, "Recently a friend of mine referred to the phrase *to be in the same boat with (someone)* as 'inherently denigrating.' I guess this person figured the phrase has its roots in the slave trade, but I disagree. Can you settle this dispute?"

If people don't stop assuming the worst of every word and phrase, I'm going to scream. Here's a 1584 citation from the *Oxford English Dictionary*,

penned by one Thomas Hudson: "Haue ye pain? so likewise pain haue we; For in one boat we both imbarked be." *In the same boat* has nothing to do with slavery and is not at all derogatory.

DAVE FARIS, of Los Angeles, California, writes, "In contemporary fiction one can encounter dialogue like this: "'There is one certain thing about your personality: it is deficient,'" John said to Fred: The use of the colon seems inappropriate for dialogue; characters simply do not speak this way. What is your opinion?"

I can't work up much indignation about the colon in your example. The reason that sentence reads badly, I'd say, is just that you've concocted an awfully clunky line of dialogue. Intonation affords us many more nuances in speech than we have in writing, so generally I don't see the point of narrowing our options for rendering the spoken word in writing. Ask me about using colons or semicolons in dialogue attributed to small children, though, and I'll change my tune. It doesn't seem right to me to put colons and semicolons in the mouth of any character who can't be expected to know what they are.

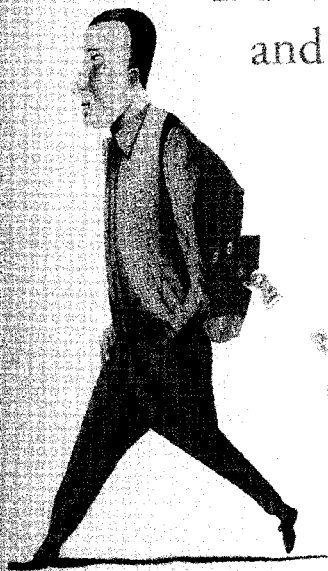
EDWARD DERMON, of Roslyn Heights, New York, writes, "I heard an announcer say, 'Jackie Robinson had his number retired by all major-league clubs, and *rightfully* so.' I distinguish between *rightfully* and *rightly*. Am I right to do so?"

Yes, you are. The distinctions that dictionaries draw between the two words are at best blurry and confusing, but in good usage *rightly* is the opposite of *wrongly*, and *rightfully* means much the same as *by rights*. In saying *rightfully*, that announcer used the wrong word.

Do you have a language question or dispute? Write to Word Court in care of The Atlantic Monthly, 77 North Washington Street, Boston, MA 02114, or send e-mail to msgrammar@theatlantic.com. All letters become the property of Word Court. Ms. Grammar is also on the Web, at www.theatlantic.com/courtrecord.

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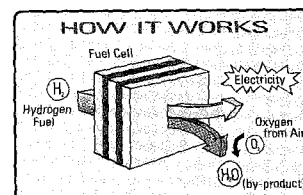


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